

# The LENINIST

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## Free the Tottenham Three!

When the Tottenham Three were framed the entire black community was put in the dock with them. Now the fight for their freedom must be taken to the racist state that jailed them

**T**HE RELEASE of Engin Raghup, Mark Braithwaite and Winston Silcott in the immediate future is beginning to look a real possibility. Home secretary Kenneth Baker, under pressure of mounting evidence, has gone for the 'soft option' of an inquiry conducted by Essex police. The fact that this is coming on the heels of a growing list of other such cases - Guildford Four, Winchester Three, Maguire Seven, Birmingham Six - raises the odds, even though a police enquiry is as much a cover up as the trail which sent the three down.

The fact that the establishment has been backed into a corner this far is largely the result of years of unstinting campaigning on the part of the jailed men's families and their supporters. However, like the Birmingham Six and Guildford Four campaigns, this has been unable to develop a base of mass active support. In the absence of a mass campaign for the unconditional release of these three political prisoners, much depends on how the establishment chooses to conduct its damage limitation exercise. If it is possible for Baker to choke the proceedings off at the level of the police inquiry, he undoubtedly will. Sixteen years incarceration for the Birmingham Six should tell us that untenable police evidence itself is no guarantee of release.

Within the 'quality' press, silence has ruled, punctuated by occasional editorial murmurings. The gutter press has suffered no such discomfiture, with *The Sun* leading the pack. The centre pages of its July 17 edition sneers at "the latest left wing campaign - 'Free Winston Silcott'". "*The Sun*", it promises, "tells you the truth about the murderous monster Silcott". Just the same way as it told you the truth about Paul Hill and Paddy Hill, remember?

The centrepiece of this nasty little hack job, around which the other lies are draped, is how the trial of the Tottenham Three in 1987 heard that PC Blakelock "fell dying under a frenzied mob led by Silcott baying for his head to be cut off and stuck on top of a pole". How the trial 'heard' this (actually, they did nothing of the sort) both confirms everything you ever knew about the gutter press and tells you much about the police 'investigation' and trial.

The alleged attempted decapitation came from the statement of a 13 year old boy, held incommunicado and seminaked for 55 hours. Even in the hysterical conditions whipped up at the time of the trial, the judge felt compelled to dismiss this 'evidence' as "inadmissible", even going so far as accusing the police of acting illegally. The prosecution at the trial made similar claims to *The Sun*. There was not one witness - not even among the 20 plus police who claimed to have seen the killing - who

could back this up. Winston's imprisonment rests on 25 words in an unsigned statement, which now even sections of the establishment are having to admit was fabricated.

What is being covered up by the press today is more than the framing of three young men. The whole context of the uprising in Tottenham in October 1985 and other similar events of that time has been distorted.

The British establishment put the whole of the black community on trial with Winston, Engin and Mark. The *Daily Star* made the racist nature of this apparent when it wrote of Winston that the "last time we have seen something like this was in a cage at London zoo eating bananas".

Taking the lead from *The Sun*, *The News of the World* calls for an extended attack on black people in Tottenham as a result of the calls to free the three. On July 21 it ghoulishly had a front page depicting Blakelock's jacket, apparently showing the entry wounds of 14 weapons. It announces "11 killers still free" and demands "find the Broadwater 11". Such gutter press hate campaigns are geared to precipitating renewed attacks on the black community.

Anyone who stood up to attack from the racist British state was and is automatically guilty. An indication of this was the way that Broadwater Farm, like so many other cases, was singled out for attack under the guise of combating drug dealers. In the US, too, this has been the justification for the continual harassment of the black community. *The Sun*'s article makes the association freely.

In a raid the week prior to the rising on the Farm, Mrs Cheryl Groce was shot down by police in Brixton. Black youth rightly reacted angrily against this vicious attack on a member of their community, and were themselves subject to police violence. The following week, Mrs Cynthia Jarrett was killed in a police raid on her home in Broadwater Farm. It was this, which has been ignored in media coverage today, which sparked the justifiable reaction of Tottenham youth. They resisted bravely against a police force in full riot array,



The racist consensus that allowed Winston Silcott to be framed still needs to be confronted

armed with CS gas and plastic bullets. They hospitalised many and killed one. In the (retracted) words of then councillor Bernie Grant, the police "got a bloody good hiding". We have no tears for the footsoldiers of the class enemy.

This resistance met with the full force of the state's hate. Houses were smashed into and wrecked, 350 people were arrested, some as young as nine. Many were beaten in custody and 160 were charged, culminating in the show trial of March 1987. No one was charged with the murder of Cynthia Jarrett.

The original trial was geared to the criminalisation of the black community. Now, sections of the establishment are attempting to reverse the process, so if the Tottenham Three do win their appeal, the flak can be directed at a few 'bad apples' in the otherwise wholesome Metropolitan Police barrel. This is what we saw in the cases of the Birmingham Six and Guildford Four, with even the token 'bad apples' being put back on the shelf in the case of the latter. The justification for this was that too much time had elapsed since the events. You can be sure that Irish republican prisoner Dessie Ellis will not benefit from similar benevolence, when he is tried events that occurred in the early 1980s.

On the other side of the coin, the Tottenham Three have suffered from exactly the same problem as other framed prisoners: the failure of the revolutionary left to build any effective campaign for their release within the work-

ing class movement.

In 1985 Tottenham council workers demonstrated during working hours against the killing of a policeman engaged in a racist assault on the black community. The following years have seen no such action taken in support of the three young men who were victims of that assault. We have argued in the context of Irish framed prisoners that, even with the release of many today, unless that fight is taken into the working class, won, and expressed in active solidarity with the cause of Irish freedom, there will always be new Birmingham Sixes and Guildford Fours. This is because the climate in society still exists to enable the ruling class to label Irish people as terrorists and criminals. The same is true of the black community.

Events such as the Broadwater Farm uprising and the consequent frameups graphically show that there is a total conflict of interests between black people in this society and the racist British state. Yet many on the left would, despite themselves, look to bridge this gulf. *Panther*, "the socialist voice of the black and asian community", an arm of the Militant Tendency, is a fine example. In its edition of January 1991 it forcefully calls for the release of the three. But it shows itself as unable to effectively champion the cause of defence of the black community in its approach to the British state. It demands: "For a police force fully accountable to the mass of ordinary people". This, from an ostensibly Marxist organisation, is completely un-Marxist.

Unlike the writers of *Panther*, Lenin had no such illusions when he demanded the "substitution of a people's militia for the police" (*Collected Works*, Vol 24, p70). The bourgeois state, including its arm the police, is in essence the organised violence of the class enemy, which we must confront with our own organised class violence. Calls on the murderers of Cynthia Jarrett to be "fully accountable" are a reactionary dead end. What is needed was shown at a very embryonic level when black youth in the inner cities organised to confront the thugs in blue, just as the miners were compelled to do

in the course of the Great Strike.

Not for the first time, sections of the British left have found themselves trailing way behind those whom they presume to lead - let us not forget that *Panther's* parent paper, *Militant* actually condemned the uprising.

But most of the left did, with whatever equivocations, defend the Tottenham Three. With one exception. Now the *Morning Star* calls "Release the Tottenham Three", and makes the usual impotent reformist call for "a full public inquiry" (editorial, July 16).

Yet, until mainstream political figures started calling for justice for the three men, the *Star* not only remained quiet on their plight, it actually supported their persecution, and by implication the persecution of the whole black community. This rag condemned the rising and, at the time of the trial, stated: "It is right that the police investigate thoroughly [by beating, torturing and framing - SQ] such a murder. And it is right that the due process of law takes its course". This 'due process' being stitching up three young men.

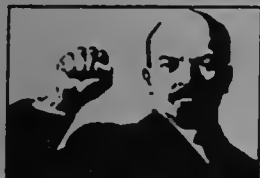
At the AGM of the cooperative which owns the *Morning Star* that same year, our supporters moved a motion condemning the trial and calling for the Tottenham Three's release. Mary Rosser, for the paper's management committee, claimed that its reporting had been exemplary, citing the support given by Lord Gifford as proof! She went on to distance the *Star* from any action taken by black youth in their defence, saying that "rioting" had nothing to do with class politics. Not her class, maybe: that of the smug, liberal middle class passive racist.

Unlike the *Morning Star*, our support for the release of the Tottenham Three is genuine, and is united with our unconditional defence of the oppressed in fighting their oppressors. What I wrote at the time of the trial is still true, the necessity of it becoming reality still burning: "Black people have a formidable enemy ranged against them. But their strength lies not only in their willingness to tool up and fight back, as they have done, but also in the fact that their enemy is the enemy that took on the miners, the printers and that takes on the gays. Indeed, it proves to be the enemy of the entire ranks of the working class and oppressed every time they are forced to fight for their rights - who collectively have a potential strength that far outweighs that of the police, the courts and their hyenas" (*The Leninist*, May 1 1987).

To make that potential a reality is the only real guarantee against further racist frameups.

Sean Quinn





Central Organ of the  
Provisional Central Committee of the  
Communist Party of Great Britain

THE LONDON meeting of the Group of Seven has come and gone. As it turned out the leaders of the seven major imperialist powers - USA, Japan, Germany, France, Britain, Canada and Italy - came up with little in the way of concrete measures to paper over the cracks that are beginning to open up in their facade of international unity. That does not mean that the G7 circus was without significance.

What we still call the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics is being incorporated into the imperialist system of states. The Soviet Union is now an associate member of the G7. The next get together will be seven plus one. There is a price to pay. Bush and the other imperialist politicians are demanding Castro's head and the opening up of the Soviet market to gang rape by the dollar, mark, pound and yen. The traitor Gorbachev will willingly oblige.

Soviet economic assistance to Cuba has all but ceased; this brave frontline of the world revolution is under siege and subject to all sorts of threats. Now Gorbachev wants to formally transform the Communist Party of the Soviet Union into a social democratic organisation - there is even talk that he will stand for president under the banner of Shevardnadze's openly capitalist Democratic Movement. As *The Economist* noted, he is now committed not only to the "reform of the Soviet economy but to transform it into something different - a capitalist economy with private companies, convertible rouble and all." (As a result even the sycophantic *Morning Star* has begun to distance itself from Gorbachev; after going along with everything Gorbachev has said and justifying his restoration of the market, its editor, Tony Chater, penned a mealy-mouthed article questioning the existence of "universal human values" - the centre pin of Gorbachevite revisionist theory, July 9 and 10 1991.)

Nevertheless the G7 meeting exposed the deep problems faced by both the seven and the one. Gorbachev went to the London meeting cap in hand. He wanted \$30 billion for each year of his five year plan to restore capitalism; but where he wanted billions he only got millions. This means the restoration of capitalism in the USSR will be a very rough ride indeed. There will be tens of millions unemployed, there will be further economic collapse and dislocation, and inflation will undoubtedly become hyper.

None of the G7 imperialist powers are in any position, not collectively and certainly not individually, to treat the USSR as Federal Germany has treated the former GDR. There will be no massive transfer of capital, no crash programme of industrial and infrastructural equalisation. All of them are experiencing severe economic difficulties as a result of the latest pre-general crisis downward oscillation in the world economy.

Britain has falling industrial production and nearly 3 million unemployed (that is after nearly 30 alterations of the method of calculation). It is now a second rate imperialist power with little room for manoeuvre or 'generosity'. Certainly it has more in common with Italy and Canada than the US, Germany and Japan. But these *core* imperialist powers have their own difficulties. Taken together, these make a new Marshall plan impossible.

Although the US still determines the world's economic metabolism, it has piled up an historically unprecedented national debt and is in sharp relative decline. It is not the power it was. For Germany, in spite of Kohl's promises to the contrary, incorporating the GDR has proved to be massively expensive. What surplus capital it once had has long gone. As for the over-exporting reliant Japan, it is pumping its capital into Western Europe on a massive scale in a desperate attempt not to be crippled by a post-1992 EC creating a fortress Europe.

The imperialists have won the Cold War, but this has not, as the *Sunday Times* imagined in the heady "end of history" days of October 1989, paved the way for a "sustained boom in the world economy similar to the golden age of the 1950s and 1960s." Because of debt, because it is of less and less importance to the imperialists, Africa is experiencing absolute decline and deindustrialisation. Starvation and social decomposition are the inevitable results. South America and India look set to follow.

Ironically though, the imperialist victory in the Cold War has paved the way for the break up of the 'west'. Three rival blocs are already in the process of crystallisation - centrally, a fortress Europe dominated by Germany and, in response, a defensive US dominated North American Free Trade Association and an equally defensive Japanese dominated western Pacific alliance of it and its little dragons. The battle lines for trade war leading to imperialist war are drawn. Humanity faces a stark choice: either world socialism or world war!

*The Editor*

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## LETTERS

### Mahmood

Despite the brave words, a strong sense of demoralisation was evident at the Glasgow Lesley Mahmood meeting. Terry Fields' imprisonment had happened that day, but there were no calls for a campaign to free him, only talk of "poor Terry being separated from his family".

Most significant was the split within Militant ranks, with the left calling for candidates to stand in other cities, and on the right the likes of Tommy Sheridan, who said no one would work harder than Militant for a Labour victory at the next election.

I argued strongly against the latter and called on all forces in Glasgow seeking to fight against capitalism and for socialism to actively support our campaign in the Glasgow Central constituency.

Tam Dean Burn  
Prospective parliamentary candidate  
for the Provisional Central Committee  
of the CPGB

### RCG

I recently attended a conference on 'Imperialism and revolution in the Middle East' organised by the Revolutionary Communist Group, to clarify for myself the RCG's position on the Gulf War, since I had found their paper and members confused and confusing, before, during and after the war.

However, when we CPGB supporters made the point that the RCG had never criticised the 'Victory to Iraq' slogan during the war, we were subjected to a torrent of abuse, "num-skulls", "blockheads", "liars", "corrupt" etc, after which the chair announced he "would not take any more contributions, especially from liars". We stayed nevertheless to try and discuss with them but were only shouted at and told that if we continued these 'attacks' we would be banned from future meetings. Why do the leaders of the RCG fear open, honest debate?

Linda Addison  
London

### Allen Hutt

David Kinson's eulogy of Allen Hutt, once chief sub-editor of the *Daily Worker*, was well justified. Hutt was a brilliant working class journalist who hammered the *Daily Worker* into a fine weapon of the class struggle.

In the late 40s and early 50s I was co-chief sub-editor with Allen. While he was a brilliant journalist, he was not, certainly in the popular front and post-war years, a revolutionary Marxist one. Nor was the Communist Party of Great Britain in that period revolutionary Marxist. It was 'when Joe turns we all turn', and any critic, however puny and whispering, went into the mincing machine.

That was the fate of my comrade Freddie Deards, who in that immediate post-war period was one of Britain's outstanding cricket and boxing writers, both on the *Worker* and on *Reynold's News*. He was also a leading member of the Young Communist League. He criticised the direction of the Party and the paper. Hutt decided Freddie was for the chop, and in true bureaucratic fashion, Freddie was stitched up and sacked at the *Worker*, without any chance of stating his case. I supported him and not long after found myself on the stones.

It is interesting to note that people like the now bold red Peter Fryer did not raise a whimper in support of their sacked colleague.

So that brings me to another letter in *The Leninist* No104-5, from Mike Martin of Sheffield, someone of whom I have never heard.

Yes, Mike, it is true. There was no Leninist trend in the CPGB, or anywhere else, 50 years ago. Yes, Mike, we were, almost all of us, "Stalinites".

But life changes. Everything does not stay the same. The 'dead' Euro has given birth to a tiny, weak baby, led by the Provisional Central Committee; what you describe as the "provisional" Leninist CPGB. For some of us, the scales have fallen from our eyes. We are prepared to admit our past mistakes; mistakes may be too small a word, perhaps I should write 'crimes'.

But you must not visit the sins of the grandfather on the children. The Communist Party of Great Britain did have a glorious birth, whatever happened to it as it grew up. The reformed Party is going to carry the red flag forward. Long life to it.

Reg Weston  
Kent

### Revealing

I found the supplementary article *20th and 21st Century Socialism* (issue 104-5) revealing about the ability of Stalinism to come to terms with the past, present and future.

If we were to exchange the words "bureaucratic socialism" for "degenerate workers' state", we would have an analysis of the USSR straight out of that most fanatical of Trotskyist papers, *Workers Power*.

What we have therefore is good old Stalinism - attacking Trotskyism while appropriating its arguments.

Despite these criticisms, it is good to see *The Leninist* reasserting the revolutionary principles of the early CPGB after 65 quite appalling years. Its chances of success depend on its ability to thoroughly reassess the past and to free itself from Stalinism.

MJ Ashe  
Aylesbury

### Brooke Talks

The Brooke initiative was a continuation of a long term British policy to achieve stability in the existing partitioned framework, through the re-establishment of devolved government in Stormont. However, the British see this as impossible without accommodation of the catholic middle class which has climbed up on the backs on the struggling nationalist working class since the 60s. The nationalist working class are now fully aware that the Anglo-Irish Agreement brought no benefit to them. It is therefore necessary to tie the nationalist working class to the catholic middle class, and marginalise the republicans. Hence power sharing.

The republican response is inadequate. The republican movement has a political perspective which does not extend beyond petty bourgeois democracy. The leadership is incapable of bringing mass working class activity to the front of its strategy.

The initiative pursued by Sinn Fein is therefore to seek to get in on the talks. The deal on the table is IRA ceasefire in exchange for confinement to barracks and declaration of intent to withdraw.

With a ceasefire there ceases to be any meaningful distinction between Sinn Fein and the SDLP; its politics in itself is not revolutionary, its armed struggle is. Its politics is constructed from half baked democratic notions, social democracy and class collaboration. Its armed struggle is a direct revolutionary response to imperialist aggression emanating from the working class ghettos and the impoverished land. In addition, it is not at all certain whether the leadership could push a ceasefire through the IRA Army Council without a split. Armed struggle is seen by many as a matter of revolution-

ary principle.

A ceasefire would earn Sinn Fein a seat at the negotiating table by robbing republicanism of its revolutionary content. But the Six County state relies for its existence on the oppression of the nationalist working class. The British could achieve stabilisation only through crushing nationalist working class resistance. The repression, pogroms, death squads and state terror would be turned full force to eradicate the memory of 22 years of struggle. The contradictions would come right to the surface and there would in all probability occur a replay of the Provisional-Official split. This is not to say that an emergent armed republican leadership would then be capable of leading the working class to victory; only communist leadership has the capacity to perform this task. Negotiations, talks, deals notwithstanding, it is the conditions in the Six Counties which have led to armed struggle, and these conditions will remain as long as the Six Counties endures.

Mike Smith  
Belfast

### China

I was slightly confused by the editorial statement, "The Cultural Revolution shows that in the remaining socialist countries a proletarian political revolution can win certain sections of the state machine..." (*The Leninist* No104-5). Are we referring to the very same (Stalinist) "state machine" which massacred the student protesters in Tiananmen Square, set up its own very special version of apartheid in Tibet, gave generous funding to the UNITA terrorist bandits, supports Pol Pot (and god knows who else), invaded Vietnam and has cuddled up to American imperialism since the early 1970s?

Of course, the restoration of capitalism in China would be an unparalleled disaster, as the resulting chaos, corruption, poverty and inequality (bad enough now) would probably make Taiwan, Singapore, South Korea and Japan look like degenerated workers' states in comparison ... Just look at what happened in Eastern Europe, which is relatively "advanced" in comparison to China.

Eddie Ford  
Cornwall

### Parliament

Comrade Finley (No104-5) would appear to have more in common with the establishment than even prime minister Major himself. Rubbishing parliament is no reason for not standing candidates to ultimately bring about its demise. If he believes civil liberties are permanently enshrined in the system, he's living in cloud cuckoo land.

What happened to the rights of civil servants to belong to a trade union only in the recent past? What happened to the miners' right to picket in the Great Strike? Rights are something which must be perpetually fought for while the class struggle still exists. I suppose we should be grateful for his scientific (!) forecast that out of the chaos in the USSR will come a society with Marxism among its ingredients.

Ted Wallis  
Bishop Auckland

Note: Letters have been shortened due to lack of space. For reasons of political security we have changed certain names, addresses and details.

### WRITE OR RING

If you wish to reply to any of these letters, raise questions or comment on articles in *The Leninist*, please write to The Editor, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX, or phone 071-431 3135.

# Albania alone

Is Albania, for some the 'only' socialist country in the world, going down the same road as the rest of Eastern Europe?

UNTIL quite recently, if you were visiting Albania you would have been greeted at the border with the following declaration: "Even if we have to go without bread, we Albanians will never betray the principles of Marxism-Leninism". Unsurprisingly, the people opted for bread.

Now all such slogans have been removed, along with many other symbols of Albanian socialism, not least statues of Stalin. More importantly the Party of Labour of Albania is deeply divided with one wing set on a social democratic course and an alliance with the openly pro-capitalist Democratic Party. This is a cause for profound regret and concern, not only from those blinkered sectarian revolutionaries who considered Albania the *only* socialist country in the world, but also for Leninists who have been consistent in their unconditional defence of all socialist countries - no matter what disagreements we have had with their leaders.

Albania suffered for many years under the rule of the Ottoman Empire and then later under fascism during World War II. It was also the most backward country in Europe. Before World War II life expectancy was 38, illiteracy was 90%, there was little industry and the working class constituted a very small section of the population.

A national liberation war against the fascist occupation was waged from 1941 onwards. This was in the main under the leadership of the Communist Party of Albania, which had been formed in the same year with Enver Hoxha in the leadership.

Victory came in November 1944. Unlike most of occupied Europe, the Albanian masses achieved liberation without the direct aid of the Red Army. The new government with Enver Hoxha at its head carried out major social reforms, undermining the power of the domestic bourgeoisie and landlords, and giving land to the peasants. Although this socialist course was the result of national conditions, world conditions created by the Red Army's defeat of Nazi Germany were undoubtedly crucial.

Understandably therefore Albanian socialism was, like the rest of Eastern Europe, based on the model of socialism that had evolved in the Soviet Union. This was deformed socialism, bureaucratic socialism where mass democracy was lacking, socialism where the bureaucracy of the workers' state and workers' party was the master of society instead of its servant.

Unlike most communist parties though, the CPA never degenerated through a watering down of the prin-

ciples of Marxism-Leninism. The CPA - founded in the 1940s - was *centrist* from birth. Thus the personality cult of Stalin was no cover for bureaucratisation and a turn to the right, rather a litmus test of remaining true to one's principles. As we know, in the hands of Hoxha, Stalin was portrayed as a consistent champion of communism and advocate of violent revolution. Long after the 20th Congress of the CPSU, Hoxha said of Stalin, "No mistake of principle can be found in the works of this outstanding Marxist-Leninist" (*With Stalin* p15).



Hoxha in the 40s: one more failure of 'official communism'

What was remarkable about the comrades from Albania, however, was that while others, above all the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, continued their course to the right, they remained true to their founding politics for a remarkably long time and even gave their centrist politics a *left twist*.

Upon the suggestion of Stalin, the Party 'broadened' its name in 1947 to the Party of Labour of Albania. However, a year later came Yugoslavia's break with the Soviet Union. The fact that Yugoslavia made moves to incorporate Albania reinforced the nationalism of its leaders and prepared the ground for taking its 'Stalinist' politics to their logical conclusion: isolation.

As it turned out it was Khrushchev, not the Titoites, who came to be seen as the main threat to Albania. Hoxha claimed that Khrushchev "wanted Albania turned into a fruit-growing colony" which would serve the Soviet Union. Yet against such great power chauvinism, Hoxha did more than follow an Albanian variant of the nationalism that had come to dominate the world communist movement.

The CPSU's announcement in 1961 that the dictatorship of the proletariat had been replaced by the 'state of the whole people' provided the ideological justification for an ideological split. Hoxha denounced the CPSU lock stock and barrel. The 'Khrushchevites', as he called the CPSU till his death, had restored capitalism in the Soviet Union and the European socialist countries (in other words, what actually happened in

1989, Hoxha claimed had happened in the 1960s).

Albania looked for new friends and found one in China (which had also broken with the Soviet Union). The friendship did not last long. But although Albania found itself totally isolated in the world system of states, this did not prevent Hoxha founding his own international movement, indeed it no doubt encouraged him. Since the late 1970s there has existed as a result an alternative, wholly Enverist, 'world communist movement' with national sections in many countries.

In a few countries, not least Ethiopia, these organisations developed a following, though in the main they were little more than lost Maoist sects reliant on Tirana for moral, political and financial support. This could only produce tailism and a most distorted world view.

The belief that socialism could be built and communism reached by the efforts of 3 million people living among a range of mountains was always a far-fetched utopia. Isolation could only exacerbate Albania's authoritarian, anti-democratic tendencies and relative backwardness, it remained the poorest country in Europe.

By 1990 Albania - now with Ramiz Alia at its head - found its problems coming home to roost. The real capitalist counterrevolution had swept Eastern Europe. Albania was bound to be affected, not least ideologically. The 1950s mould began to crack. Propelled by the same laws as the other 'official communists', the PLA launched its own version of perestroika. Under the guise of 'democratisation' and a 'new economic mechanism' the retreat from socialism began. Just as Gorbachev's perestroika was promoted as advancing socialism, the Alia proposals were promoted as "the strengthening of the peoples' state power and the improvement of the political system" (Politburo report, November 6 1990).

The peaceful, democratic counter-revolution is now well advanced in Albania. Imperialism is sticking its claws in through food and other aid. Living standards continue to fall and the working class is completely alienated from the state (it was a general strike that brought down the Fatos Nano government). It would be tragic if socialism in Albania went down with only a whimper. But it would be farcical if those revolutionaries who in the name of Marxism-Leninism lionised Hoxha and Alia did not learn the lesson that it is impossible to build communism in one country and disastrous to follow those who claim they can.

Michael Waters

## IN STRUGGLE

The new Tory administration in Brent is hell-bent on competing with Wandsworth for the title of "Britain's Brightest Borough". In contrast to the former Labour Council's more 'pragmatic' methods of running down jobs and services in the borough, the Tories are doing a real hatchet job. The basic conditions of employment of Brent employees are being attacked from all sides. Job descriptions are abolished in favour of a more 'flexible and open' approach to work. This means workers can be forced to do anything, at the peril of losing their jobs. New conditions of service are being railroaded through by the council and their management stooges. The new sickness procedure can mean workers facing disciplinary action or dismissal after just one day's sickness! The massive job cuts which the Council wants to make will be made far easier through the use of such dismissal procedures, which will be linked with pay-related 'performance monitoring' of all staff designed to flush out those deemed not slave-like enough to fulfil the Tories' requirements for slave labour. However, workers are beginning to fight back against the cuts and attacks on their conditions of work, and are balloting to take strike action in the near future. A march was called on July 27 against the cuts being made by the Tories, which include the closure of the Race Unit, the shutting of many schools, libraries, day centres and the axing of many vital services to the community. Our supporters mobilised a militant contingent behind our CPGB banner. *SM*

About one thousand people took part in the march outside Walton jail on July 20 to protest at the jailing of MP Terry Fields for non-payment of his poll tax. Militant made a limited mobilisation of its supporters, providing almost all the speakers, but the majority at the rally were local workers. The grass roots support for Militant was confirmed yet again, passers by applauding and motorists hooting. But what was also demonstrated was Militant's total lack of revolutionary politics. Their "we are the real Labour Party" line was plugged, and the highly questionable statement that the labour and trade union movement was founded on the basis of breaking "bad laws" was made repeatedly, with the implication that most bourgeois laws are acceptable and should be obeyed. The SWP was no better, with their "Free Terry Fields. Kick the Tories out" chant. The only revolutionary voice raised was that of the CPGB, mainly through the distribution of *The Leninist*. By and large it was received with interest. One Militant supporter wanted to know who we supported in the by-election, and on being told Mahmood, accepted his copy of *The Leninist*. Pointing to the *Socialist Organisation* seller, he said: "He campaigned for Killoyle, and has the cheek to turn up here." The reaction to the CPGB banner from ex-members of the old Communist Party is interesting. "Are they still going? Is there a local branch?" None of the 'official communist' parties were represented, despite coverage of the march in the *Morning Star* next day. *PP*



Raising the banner

Hackney tenants are beginning to realise that united class struggle is the only way to fight back against police harassment and poor housing. At a tenants meeting on July 23 tenants vented their anger against their MP Diane Abbot and at the same time made it clear to her that they would no longer put their future in the hands of MPs, the council or police, but take it into their own hands. More and more stories emerged of disgusting housing conditions threatening the health and often the life of tenants, together with horrific reports of police brutality on the recent 'drugs' raid of the Pembury Estate (in which nothing was found, but innocent people were still held in custody) and of continual racist harassment from police. It became clear to the whole meeting that we needed to take direct action and to confront these attacks. Calls for united action between squatters and tenants to defend ourselves from the police and bailiffs and the divide and rule tactics of the council were met with enthusiastic applause, as were calls for rent strikes as an effective weapon to demand decent housing. The energy and anger is there - with revolutionary leadership we can forget 'pressurising' the Council: confront it and fight back as a class for what we need. *LB*

## Holiday time



Summer holidays are with us. Schools and colleges have broken up and most of us are planning a week or more away from our normal routine. But there is no holiday for our fund. We still need £600 each month, July and August included. The special steps being taken to reach a fortnightly schedule are bringing extra costs. Many comrades are financially stretched in the effort to meet their Summer Offensive targets by the end of July, and those not participating directly should show their solidarity by a special donation to the fund. In July we missed the target by just £24. Comrades EG, AS, TD, and JN deserve a special mention for their efforts. Let's make sure that August makes good the shortfall - send in a donation now so we have a flying start.

Vernon Douglas  
Fund organiser



# Soapin' the rope

## The strategy and tactics of breaking the grip of the Labour Party

**L** EFT WING Communism, *An Infantile Disorder*, written by Lenin in 1920, in which he advocated electoral support for the Labour Party "as a rope supports a hanged man" has been used by many to justify support for Labour ever since.

Dealing with the relationship of communists to the Labour Party in 1920, when it contested parliamentary elections masquerading as a workers' socialist party, Lenin, writing in *Left Wing Communism*, declared: "in the interests of the revolution, working class revolutionaries should give these gentlemen a certain amount of parliamentary support" (CW Vol 31 p81, my emphasis - PC). The basis for giving a "certain amount" of "parliamentary support" to the reformist Labour party was a tactical manoeuvre devised specifically for the Labour Party in Britain, due to certain conditions existing at that time. The purpose and role of this limited support was expressed by Lenin in that now famous phrase: "to support Henderson with my vote in the same way as a rope supports the hanged".

For more than 70 years since that time, this well known and now hackneyed phrase has been used by the opportunists to justify the most reactionary policies and manoeuvres.

To anyone with a Marxist understanding, it is obvious that one cannot abstract a tactic from any period in history and mechanically apply it to today's circumstances, without giving concrete historical reasons for its application; Marxism demands this as a science.

As a science, Marxism is in a continuous state of development, and within the parameters of basic principles relating to capitalist society, elements of its teachings, such as tactics and prognosis, have to be discarded, or revised according to changing conditions. To merely argue that Labourism has not been exposed, therefore we must apply the tactics advocated by Lenin, without consideration for the radically changed class relationship of forces since 1920, is the methodology of epigones and dogmatists. Lenin's tactic of support for the reformist leaders and their party had far greater implications than those of passively exposing reformism.

### Experience of the masses

In opposition to the British ultra-lefts, Lenin correctly pointed out that a change in the views of the working class is "brought about by the political experience of the masses, never by propaganda alone" (*Ibid*, p84). This is why Lenin envisaged, on the basis of specific historical conditions, the tactic of "parliamentary support" for Labour. This was proposed in order to accelerate the process of the workers acquiring the "experience" of reformism, at the critical moment of it being put to the practical test, during what Lenin viewed as a developing revolutionary situation. Through electing Labour to a position of governmental power, it would be forced into the position whereby it could, in the eyes of its militant supporters, without hindrance apply its pledges to the workers to introduce radical socialist reforms.

By securing the election of a Labour government at that specific historical juncture, communists could prove to the masses, through their concrete experience and not through words alone, the correctness of the communist view that Henderson and Co, the Labour leaders, could not solve the workers' problems, thereby immediately opening up the road to the revolutionary overthrow of the Henderson government.

The opportunists pedantically, without any serious thought to the matter, quote the words of Lenin on the need for workers to acquire "experience" of a Labour government, irrespective of the historical situation prevailing. The workers have been through the experience of five Labour governments with approximately 25 years in office. Yet, far from being prepared to overthrow the reformist governments, the workers continue to support and vote Labour. Does not this fact prove that when the

Labour governments were elected the concrete circumstances or the class relationship of forces had changed since those pertaining to Lenin's tactical position of 1920?

No one can dispute that experience is far superior to mere propaganda, but neither can it be disputed that the value, strength and end result of experience is determined according to the historical conditions under which one gains an experience. Despite the experience of Labour governments, we find that a greater percentage of workers have voted Labour. In the election of 1929 following MacDonald's 1924 government, Labour recorded nearly 4% increase in votes. The 1964 Wilson government saw an increase of 4% in its percentage of votes in the 1966 election and the same happened with the Labour governments from February to October 1974: a rise of 2% proving that to passively experience a reformist government does not in itself automatically lead to its exposure as being reactionary. Under the influence of opportunism, this experience of Labour governments is translated into tailist 'critical support' and passive 'demands' upon the reformists, and has led to a negative reactionary policy, and the strengthening of reformism.

### Revolutionary Perspectives

Lenin outlines the two conditions for the success of a proletarian revolution: "It is only when the 'lower classes' do not want to live in the old and when the 'upper classes' cannot carry on in the old way, that the revolution can triumph" (p85, original emphasis). He stated the above conditions for revolution, not for abstract pedagogical reasons, but as a description of the developing situation in Britain at that time. On the basis of this analysis of the situation in 1920, Lenin concluded: "both conditions for a successful proletarian revolution are clearly maturing in Great Britain" (*Ibid*).

It was on this critical premise of the existence of a rapidly developing revolutionary situation that Lenin based his tactics. On the basis of this situation Lenin considered that, with the advent of Labour to office, "it will be possible, with serious chances of success, to overthrow the government of the Hendersons at once" (*Ibid* p86, my emphasis - PC). In other words, Lenin viewed the victory of a Labour government at that particular moment, when "both conditions for a successful proletarian revolution are clearly maturing", as the catalyst for the revolutionary uprising of the workers under the leadership of the Communist Party of Great Britain, at that time in the process of formation.

On the basis of experiencing the contrast between their expectations of a Labour government, and the reality of Labour's defence of capitalism against the workers' rising revolutionary tide, the working class would undergo a traumatic experience, leading to a sharp division and break with Labourism. With the leadership of the Communist Party the possibility of the immediate revolutionary overthrow of the bourgeois Labour government would open up. Lenin's tactic of giving Henderson and Co "parliamentary support" was conditional on the existence and combination of the above factors and not a gesture of extended support for Labour and its government either as a 'lesser evil' or as a generalised strategy of support in order to expose.

A minority Labour government was elected in 1924, four years after Lenin advanced his tactic of "parliamentary support" for Labour. The revolutionary conditions upon which Lenin had based his tactical approach had receded and a more favourable set of economic circumstances for capitalism had developed. Under these conditions, the Labour government was able to make minor concessions, particularly toward the unemployed and on the housing question.

The change in economic conditions, the minor but psychologically important reforms, together with the fact that it was a minority government -

a government which could conveniently plead that it was hindered by its lack of a majority in its ability to adopt socialist measures, confirming Lenin's stricture that such a government would have to be free of dependence upon bourgeois support - served to dampen and deflect any mass revolutionary movement among the workers. But these were not the sole factors invalidating Lenin's 'support' for Labour tactic; there also lacked a true revolutionary approach by the Communist Party of the day. Unlike the Party Lenin envisaged, which would seek to take advantage of the Labour government's difficulties, and so ensure its revolutionary overthrow "at once", the CPGB drifted towards a left centrist position.

In the Party's paper, *Workers Weekly* of February 8 1924, Palme Dutt, editor and leading theoretician of the CPGB, wrote: "We are not fighting against the Labour government, which it is our concern to uphold and sustain". This is certainly not the policy of a Party intent upon leading the masses toward the revolutionary overthrow of the reactionary reformist government.

### No revolutionary party - no revolution

The existence of a revolutionary situation is no guarantee of the success of a socialist revolution. A revolutionary situation will inevitably develop, due to the contradictions of capitalism, but without the existence of a revolutionary party it will degenerate and dissolve into chaos.

The road would be open for the intervention of pseudo revolutionary organisations, such as the centrists of Militant and the SWP, who would compromise the struggle to overthrow capitalism, and lead to the victory of counterrevolution. History has proven the correctness of this basic Leninist axiom time and time again. The existence of a Communist Party before the necessity of the act of revolution itself is imperative.

Without such a vanguard party the revolution is doomed from the start. Such a party cannot be built on the eve of the revolution; one cannot say that we must first expose reformism and free the masses from its reactionary leadership, and then we will assume the leadership of the workers' struggles. The task of exposing reformism, both of the right and left, is a dialectical process which will be accomplished in the course of struggle itself, from the smallest economic struggle to the broader mass political struggles.

Concomitant with this exposure of reformism, and in the course of leadership of the struggles of the masses, will be the development and building of the revolutionary vanguard party.

*Militant's* justification for its call to vote Labour on a national level, purge or not, in its assessment of Walton is implicit in the statement that workers "see their interests as best served by a Labour government" (July 12). Leaving aside that this is as true for Walton as anywhere else (we can leave the papers' own supporters to make sense of that), such an approach is alien to Marxism. To give support for Labour under today's conditions, in a relatively peaceful period of class struggle, is to contribute to an artificial theory of stageism.

This is as true for those organisations that offer 'revolutionary' critical support (Workers Power, WRP, etc) as it is for Militant Tendency's own brand of parliamentary reformism. Instead of leading the masses to a higher state of class consciousness on the basis of experience through struggle, they tail end the consciousness of the masses, and introduce revolutionary ideas and politics after the masses have reached that stage of revolutionary consciousness and are prepared to listen to our revolutionary policy: a conjecture that the masses can spontaneously acquire a revolutionary consciousness without the intervention of the revolutionary party, and a theory in complete contradiction to the principles of Marxism-Leninism.

The task of building a revolutionary party and



Tactics, Lenin style

putting forward revolutionary ideas and tactics, is an immediate one, even though at this particular point in time it means attracting only a small minority. What we do today, how we develop our cadres, influences what we will be able to do tomorrow, when the objective revolutionary situation merges with the subjective forces for revolution, ie the revolutionary party and its revolutionary policy and perspectives. It was the adoption of such a strategy by the Bolsheviks that armed them in the art of revolutionary struggle and enabled them to provide revolutionary leadership in 1917.

### The Soviet experience - Lenin

Two additional factors, apart from the above, stand out in Lenin's tactic of support for Labour to office. One is that Henderson and Co were afraid to take power alone, that is without a coalition with the bourgeois parties. As Lenin wrote in *Left Wing Communism*, "we must, first, help Henderson or Snowden to beat Lloyd George and Churchill (or, rather, compel the former to beat the latter, because the former are afraid of their victory)" (*op cit*, p85).

Second, Lenin considered the situation in British politics as similar to that of Russia in 1917, just prior to the revolution. Lenin draws this example: "the Bolsheviks' propaganda against the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries (ie, the Russian Hendersons and Snowdens) derived benefit precisely from a circumstance of this kind. We said to the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries: assume full power without the bourgeoisie, because you have a majority in the Soviets ... But the Russian Hendersons and Snowdens were afraid to assume power without the bourgeoisie" (p87).

In the light of these statements by Lenin, the critical question must be asked, why were these reformists, both in Russia and in Britain afraid to take power as the sole representatives of the working class? The answer lies in the consequences of their taking power, unhindered by a coalition with and dependence upon the bourgeois parties which would excuse them from applying their allegedly socialist programmes.

Calling for the Mensheviks and SRs to take power, based as they were on mass revolutionary workers' organisations, in the name of these soviets, clearly meant the workers organised within the soviets taking power. As Lenin wrote in an article *On Compromises* (CW Vol 25, p311), the Mensheviks-SRs as a majority in the soviets, should "agree ... to form a government wholly and exclusively



responsible to the soviets, the latter taking over all power locally as well". A declaration of taking power by the Mensheviks and SRs in the name of the soviets, taking power, both locally and nationally, an essential condition for calling upon the Russian reformists to take power.

One can clearly understand the fear of the Mensheviks and SRs in declaring for soviet power; but was it such a case with the Hendersons and Snowdens, based upon bourgeois parliamentary elections? Lenin was obviously approaching the British revolution from another angle, but with the same objective in mind. Given that he considered that a revolutionary situation was rapidly maturing - which was the perspective of the Communist International at this time - even without the presence of soviets, Henderson and Co feared taking even parliamentary power by themselves, as it would signify to the workers the defeat of the bourgeoisie and the advent of what the workers considered to be their own workers' socialist government taking power in their name.

This would lead to the formation of councils of action or soviets and a potential for workers' power. Such a revolutionary development would not only cause a reactionary backlash on the part of the bourgeoisie, it would also compel Labour to reveal its true colours, and come out in defence of its capitalist masters and take steps, as the government of the day, to suppress both the communists and the workers' mass organisations, as did the Russian Hendersons during the July days of 1917.

The developing workers' councils would then become the basis of a dual power as an alternative to the Labour 'Kerensky' government. As Lenin noted, "even in the purely Menshevik and completely opportunist Independent Labour Party the rank and file is in favour of the Soviets" (Vol 31 p87, Lenin's emphasis). In other words, both the Mensheviks and SRs in Russia and Labour in Britain feared to take power alone, without the bourgeoisie, as the revolutionary masses in both countries would take their accession to power as the signal for themselves to take power out of the hands of the factory owners and the armed forces of the state machine, and to assume power and control for themselves.

The means for doing so in Russia, the soviets, already existed; in Britain, councils of action or workers' councils would have to be formed as a practical means for carrying out such a revolutionary act - the development of such means of taking power having to be initiated by the revolutionary vanguard, the Communist Party, as did happen in 1920 with the Hands off Russia campaign. The refusal of dockers to permit arms to be shipped to Poland in the Jolly George incident, and the fear of the masses being led by communists, forced the TUC and Labour Party to call, with great response from the masses, for councils of action to prevent capitalist assistance to Poland in its war with the soviets. This particular incident proved the correctness of Lenin's prognosis that the workers were prepared to act in a revolutionary manner.

## The soviet experience - Trotsky

The Trotskyite movement, following in the footsteps of Trotsky himself, omits the essentials of Lenin's revolutionary approach; they pick and choose aspects which suit their opportunist politics in order to give their Menshevism the halo of Leninism.

Trotskyism, which in words declares its revolutionary intentions, at best in practice adopts a similar position to Palme Dutt in 1924. Militant's slogan of "Tories out! Labour to power on a socialist programme", signifies its support for Labour in terms of positive identification. Even in the context of a McCarthyite purge, its paper states: "We are committed to a Labour victory at the next general election" (Militant, July 12).

Others cannot quite stomach such a positive gloss as Militant paint, and say Labourism is a 'lesser evil'. This is coupled with the excuse that we do so because the masses of workers want a Labour government. Workers Power, the 'hard' face of Trotskyism, combines its call to "vote Labour ... but organise to fight whoever wins" with the shoddy excuses that this is "to put the illusions of millions to the test of action", and that the "only real opportunity Labour offers is to bring the pressure of the organised working class to bear on a future Labour government" (June 1991). What illusions? Socialist illusions? We think not.

The lesser of two evils, possibly. But even then, Labour's Citizens' Charter as opposed to the Tory's Citizen's Charter (note the apostrophe) and other such Tweedledum-Tweedledee policies makes this marginal, if not unimportant. But it has nothing to do with class consciousness. The problem in bringing power to bear on any government is related to the political force that leads it, not the greater susceptibility of 'socialist' governments to workers' pressure, history proves. Such statements say much more about the illusions of Labourite Trotskyites than they

do about "the illusions of millions".

Trotsky and his followers have consistently called for the taking of power by the social democratic parties throughout the world, irrespective and without regard for the class relationship of forces, which formed the basis for Lenin's tactic. In justification for this generalised slogan of support for social democracy and its government, Trotsky in the *Transitional Programme* refers to the Leninist demand for the Russian reformists to take power (p133).

Trotsky writes as follows: "From April to September 1917, the Bolsheviks demanded that the SRs and Mensheviks break with the liberal bourgeoisie and take power into their own hands." The significance of Trotsky's statement is that he mentions neither the slogan accompanying this demand, which was "All power to the soviets", nor the demand that the Russian reformists take power "solely and exclusively responsible to the soviets". Could such an omission have been accidental or an oversight on Trotsky's part? To suggest that a perspicacious person such as Trotsky did not recognise the revolutionary significance of reference to the soviets taking power is simply ludicrous. When we study Trotsky's writing further, his purpose in omitting the revolutionary content of Lenin's demand and slogan with regard to the soviets becomes clear.

Trotsky, by his omission of reference to soviets, has reduced the demand for the reformists to take power to a passive and reactionary slogan: a demand for the establishment of and support for reformist bourgeois parliamentary governments, which had become his policy in line with his orientation toward an alliance with and entry into the mass social democratic parties.

As Trotsky writes in the *Transitional Programme*: "Of all the parties and organisations which base themselves on the workers and peasants and speak in their name, we demand that they break politically from the bourgeoisie and enter upon the road of struggle for the workers' and farmers' government" (p134). No reference here to the need for soviets as the basis for such a demand, which is dealt with in the following section of the programme. Although Trotsky states that "The slogan of soviets ... crowns the programme of transitional demands" (p136), its relation to critical support for social democracy is linked only insofar as the programme's two sections follow each other.

Trotsky then attempts to procure the credibility of Bolshevism for his defence and support for reformist bourgeois governments when they are in office, by declaring: "Under this provision the Bolshevik party promised the Mensheviks and the SRs ... its revolutionary aid against the bourgeoisie" (*Ibid*, p133). The whole logic of Trotsky's argument, through omitting all reference to the soviets taking power, is that Lenin and the Bolsheviks were prepared not only to support reformist parties to governmental office, such as a Labour government in Britain, but also to support and defend that government, rather than put them into office under circumstances which would ensure their immediate overthrow, or as Lenin put it, "at once".

As Trotsky reveals later on in the *Transitional Programme*, it was his strategy both to support reformists into office and to support and defend their government: "On this road we promise them full support against capitalist reaction" (p134). This reactionary policy of giving support to the reformist agents of capitalism is faithfully carried out today by the majority of Trotskyites, in complete opposition to the revolutionary ideas of Leninism.

That Lenin strongly opposed such support and defence for even the most democratic reformist governments is evidenced in his position with regard to Kerensky's government during the period of the Kornilov revolt, when he declared it "unprincipled" to give Kerensky support or to defend his government against Kornilov. As Lenin wrote in *To the Central Committee of the RSDLP*: Those who are "supporting the provisional government are unprincipled ... And even now [during the Kornilov revolt - PC] we must not support Kerensky's government" (original emphasis). And further on in the same article: "We will fight, we are fighting against Kornilov, but we do not support Kerensky".

The whole concept and policies of all factions of world Trotskyism are based upon the falsifications of Leninism by Leon Trotsky himself.

Far from supporting Labour to hang it, the centrist type of support is that of defending and sustaining Labourism in its domination of the workers' movement; it supports it from its feet to prevent the rope tightening round its neck.

A condition arising from the situation in 1920 in Britain, and that of Russia in 1917, was that Labour (like the Mensheviks and SRs) was afraid to take power, through fear of opening the floodgates of revolutionary action by the masses. As these revolutionary aspirations have been lacking for many years, and are absent today, Labourism, far from fearing to take office, struggles frantically to assume parliamentary power. With an acquiescent working class lacking in a socialist ideology, they

can assume office and enjoy its financial and honorary benefits, and ingratiate themselves still further with the capitalist class. With the type of support accorded to it by the centrists, Labourism has nothing to fear.

## Result of Lenin's support tactic

That Lenin was emphatically opposed to support in any manner or form for bourgeois governments, whether of left or right, is indisputable. Even with the reactionary military uprising of Kornilov, which aimed to overthrow the democratic Kerensky government and drown the revolutionary movement in blood, Lenin considered it *unprincipled* to give any support to the provisional government.

Lenin adopted the strategy of "march separately" from the petty bourgeois reformist forces of the Mensheviks and SRs and their provisional government led by Kerensky, but to "strike together" with their rank and file against Kornilov. This was to be achieved, not through an alliance with Kerensky or the petty bourgeois left leadership, as the Trotskyites suggest, but through *independent* action, pursuing the Bolsheviks' own aim; the revolutionary overthrow of the bourgeois system. The former would have placed limitations upon the Bolsheviks' struggle and given the petty bourgeois left credibility as being revolutionary and class enemies of Kornilov.

Despite Lenin's consistent demand and call for a Menshevik-SR soviet government in 1917, the reformist forces refused to take power in the name of the soviets and continued their support for the capitalist Kerensky government.

Lenin's tactic of placing reformism into office did not materialise, neither in regard to the Menshevik-SRs taking power in the name of the soviets, nor in regard to supporting Labour "as a rope supports a hanged man". Both approaches in this direction did not follow through to full fruition. The reasons were in the one case because the Menshevik-SRs feared to take power through the soviets, and in the other case because the Labour government initially came to power in parliament in 1924, during a period when the revolutionary wave had receded, and as a minority government which was dependant upon the Liberal bourgeois parliamentary party, together with the fact that the Communist Party adopted a centrist position of critical support for Labour, in place of a policy of revolutionary class struggle.

However, despite the failure of this particular tactic in Russia, because the revolutionary situation prevailed and the Bolshevik Party retained its revolutionary opposition to Menshevism, it was able to expose the reformists as enemies of the working class, and win the Russian workers to revolution.

The Russian reformists, in the July days of 1917, through placing themselves firmly in the camp of the bourgeoisie, and adopting a blatantly anti-soviet, pro-war position, and through their direct and open assistance to the bourgeoisie in the suppression of the revolutionary left - which aided and abetted the later Kornilov rebellion - exposed themselves as enemies of peace and of the revolutionary aspiration of the masses. This development was forced upon reformism in order to defend Russian capitalism against the rising tide of revolutionary struggle and the anti-war movement, which was sustained and fostered by the Bolsheviks. At this stage of development, apart from one other attempt to compromise, Lenin called for immediate preparations for the revolutionary seizure of power by the soviets.

This led to the undermining of support for the previous Menshevik-SR majority in the soviets. The culminating factor, the attempts by Kornilov to suppress the soviets by military force, and the exposure of the connivance and acquiescence of the Kerensky government and its Menshevik-SR supporters in this military revolt, finally won to the Bolsheviks the allegiance of the working class and a majority in the soviets for revolution. The winning of the majority of the workers for revolution was only possible due to Lenin's consistent revolutionary opposition, despite the threat of a reactionary military revolt, to giving any support to the reformist Kerensky government, and his refusal to consider any defence of the reformist government despite its bourgeois democratic nature.

Despite Lenin's consistent attempt to force the Russian reformists to take power in the name of the soviets, this tactic failed in a literal sense, although it fully exposed the vacillating nature of the reformists. The socialist revolution was successful. This was only due to Lenin's recognition of the change in circumstances which invalidated the tactic, and the necessity of attaining the objective of the seizure of power from another approach: that of a direct appeal to the masses and the soviets to take power into their hands under the leadership of the Bolsheviks.

To continue the appeal to the Menshevik-SRs

to take power after they had openly and ruthlessly turned against the revolution and its organisations, would have given revolutionary credentials and credibility to these reactionaries, and would have beheaded the revolutionary movement.

## Lessons of Bolshevik success

The lesson to be learned by revolutionary Marxists is that if a tactic fails to materialise, if one cannot coerce one's enemy into a particular disadvantageous position, or if conditions have changed invalidating that particular tactic, then one must adopt another method of approach. Lenin did so by calling for a complete break with the Menshevik-SRs and appealing directly to the supporters of the reformists and of the soviets to take power themselves, under the leadership of the Bolshevik Party. It is true that at this stage, the reformists had exposed their own bankruptcy, not by assuming power in the name of the soviets, but through their anti-soviet policies and actions in response to the rising revolutionary tide against their capitalist masters.

Labour, in or out of office, adopts basically the same stance as the Russian reformists in attacking the workers' struggles, the prime example being the miners' Great Strike of 1984-5. This experience invalidates the argument that only through placing the reformists in office can we expose their anti-working class nature. The experience and lessons of the successful Russian revolution prove otherwise. Due to a lack of revolutionary class leadership during the miners' strike, the miners and their supporters who became conscious of Labour's treacherous policies, turned toward the left reformists, who gave lip service to the struggle but continued to tie the potentially revolutionary advanced workers to the reformist movement of the Labour Party.

The revolutionary left assisted in this process through calling upon and attempting to pressurise the reformist left to take action on behalf of the miners. Many demanded that Kinnock should 'take sides', when it was obvious that he already had - against the miners. The revolutionary course would have been to call upon the miners themselves to broaden the struggle onto a class basis by appealing directly to the workers of other industries, and to those organised within the miners' support groups to form, with themselves, councils of action. Despite few forces, our comrades fought consistently for this throughout the Great Strike. If developed on a broader scale, this would undoubtedly have led to many of the class conscious miners and other advanced workers breaking with the old method of support and pressurising the reformist leaders, and joining the ranks of the revolutionary vanguard, and establishing class organisations such as councils of action.

Despite present day conditions, one cannot rule out any principled and legitimate tactic in advance. Precisely because it is possible for conditions to materialise whereby it may be advantageous to give support to a party of the left, "as a rope supports a hanged man", it is necessary to understand the nature and limitations of such a tactic.

If a revolutionary situation were to materialise, and the masses of workers were to be supported a centrist party giving lip service to obtaining socialism or socialist measures through parliamentary or reformist methods, then it might advance the revolutionary movement to place them in office to expose their false position. The nature and role of such a manoeuvre would have to be both understood and explained to the masses to avoid falling into the mire of opportunism and tailism, and thereby negating the whole purpose of the tactic.

One principle stands out clearly in the use of such a tactic, and that is that the revolutionary organisation advocating it must consistently pursue an independent revolutionary class policy based upon the mass organisation of the workers, with a view to overthrowing - not supporting - through revolutionary means, that party and its government of the left which it supports into office. Without such a policy and perspective, as history has shown, reformism will be given credibility and an extended lease of life, and the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism set back, perhaps for generations to come.

Today, the Kinnock brand of reformism does not pretend to be a socialist reformist party. The Labour Party appeals to the working class, which is thoroughly imbued with bourgeois ideology, with a policy of making capitalism more efficient and humane; a lesser evil to Toryism. Furthermore there is no Communist Party organising the vanguard, although the basis for such a development is growing. Not even one of the conditions enumerated by Lenin exists for the tactic of parliamentary support for Labour. Until these lessons are understood, reformism and opportunism will continue to dominate the working class movement, and the revolutionary struggle for socialism will be but an ideal.

Paul Conlon





■ Glasnost is having trouble reaching Glasgow, with the 'broad front' Clyde Books (another Party asset given away) deciding to ban The Leninist from its shelves. When approached, workers in the shop ludicrously justifying it by stating that "the Provisional Central Committee of the CPGB does not exist". When asked about the existence of the 'Scottish Communist Party', cited in literature as a supporter of the bookshop, but actually existing as no more than an idea floated in the broadsheet Alert Scotland they could only answer that that had been banned as well!

■ We are thinking of running a 'most depressing organisation to be a member of' competition. We have already had one entry in from a 'Fergus N' in South London. He nominates the Euro to-be Democratic Left, in particular its Straight Left faction, which publishes Communist. Its July edition, gives us a run down on its forlorn attempts to salvage something from the Euros. Under the heading of "Party reports" there is a stirring account of their successes. The Euros' North West district committee has been replaced by district members' meetings. The first was attended by ... eight people. These eight divided into four separate factions when it came to choosing a new name. Jolly good, Straight Leftists - after spending years sneering at the 57 varieties of Trotskyism, you have finally attained the heights of "two's a party, three's a split" politics.

■ Something has happened that we did not think would occur until the crack of doom. The Revolutionary Communist Group has gone into print against us. Now, this may not be as eventful as Gabriel striking up on his horn but, after years of being goaded by us, it was a surprise. The article is a response to a letter one of our comrades sent in to us (after despairing of the RCG ever printing any of his contributions). The RCG rails against our criticisms of its position on the Gulf War. After months of kicking around in the 'Home' committee, which supported 'victory to Iraq', it left near the end of the war. We left early on, printing our withdrawal statement in the next issue of our paper. Yet we are accused of having "sneaked out". The RCG did not criticise this slogan in its paper throughout the conflict, and printed no statement of its withdrawal. When questioned on this, one RCG member answered that "there wasn't room" in their paper.

## OUR HISTORY

# Affiliation: For and against

The formation of the CPGB and its early years: documents, resolutions and manifestos

**A**FTER hearing comrades JF Hodgson and William Paul respectively speaking for and against CPGB affiliation to the Labour Party, the Communist Unity Convention (later known as the CPGB's 1st Congress) adjourned for lunch. On returning, it first occupied itself with some questions of procedure. Then the chair, comrade Arthur MacManus, proposed to throw the matter open for general discussion and get a definite decision as to whether the convention was in favour of affiliation of any sort; after this amendments would be allowed so as to decide the details. MacManus insisted that it was necessary that "every delegate should feel that the subject had been thoroughly debated" so he ruled that there would be 23 speakers, nine for affiliation and fourteen against.

Those opposing affiliation maintained that the Labour Party was thoroughly corrupt. Some, like T Barber of Southwark British Socialist Party, did so from personal experience, according to the official report:

"He and other members of the Southwark BSP, as it was then, stood as Labour candidates at the last borough council elections. They got in and were by that time disgusted absolutely by the policy and actions of the Labour Party."

A constant theme was that the Communist Party must not be tainted through association and that workers would never understand the "subtle" reasons advanced for affiliation. This was certainly the argument put forward by Tom Bell: "The first essential to rally together all the elements in the country in favour of communism was to make it clear that we have no associations with and did not stand for the same policy as the Labour Party ... we wanted a Communist Party clear and distinct from any association with reformism or the Labour Party." CL Gibbons argued along similar lines. The official report reads as follows:

CL Gibbons (Ferndale Socialist Society) opposed affiliation to the Labour Party, saying ... he would give his own experience in his own locality. There the Labour Party was in power; it was not fighting for power but had a big majority on the district council. It was discrediting itself every day; and if it was a communist district council it would discredit itself even more. What was happening? Every section of the working class at Rhondda, after working for the municipality, had been on strike against it during the last 12 months. That fact had done more to discredit the Labour Party in the eyes of the workers of Rhondda than anything we could do either inside or outside.

Even people who were not communists were saying there was nothing in the Labour control of municipalities. Were delegates from that district to go back and say to such people, "Having

reached this point by your own observation, now try and believe there is something in it"? It could not be done; they dare not. In his own lodge there were three district councillors, two members of the Board of Guardians and two JPs. One had resigned because he refused to carry out his mandate; another had refused to carry out his mandate but had remained in office...

Communists in the Rhondda had been telling the people all along, "If you go in and get control of the municipal and parliamentary machinery nothing will come of it, except that you will discredit your own case", and he and other delegates from that district dare not go back and tell the people there to go into the Labour Party.

He asked the delegates to look at the question from that point of view, not what it would entail in a general sense but what would it entail upon them tomorrow. They would go back and have to take part in the whole of the Labour Party action if we became affiliated to that Party. The Labour Party might perform the miracle of accepting communist candidates, but it would not accept all communist candidates, and they would be pledged to support every candidate put forward by the Labour Party. If they did not they would be kicked outside that party; if they did they ought to be kicked outside the Communist Party.

FL Kerran (BSP, Central London) said he thought the last speaker had given really the best towards guiding us to the right conclusion; he had given an excellent description of what was going to be the future of the political Labour Party in this country. He had described to us what had happened in Rhondda. He had told us that the Labour Party there had actually got the majority, and had failed in their local council, and that the Labour Council had become thoroughly discredited.

What was going to be the result of that? When the workers found out that the Labour Party was no damned good to them, they would then overthrow the Labour Party. But it was our business first of all to help the Labour Party get into office, and then, when they had got into office, our first act was to kick them out. When all was said and done we were really wasting our time in discussing this subject. We were discussing tactics, but what have we to do with tactics? In so far as we were concerned, we were a few individuals trying to form a general staff without an army.

Our work in the future was to go on educating enough people to agree with us. When we have enough of the men behind us we would consider tactics. Comrade Paul said that the revolution was coming soon. He (Kerran) sincerely hoped it was not; if we were going to be the people to guide the revolution in the strength we were today it was a very bad lookout for us.

George Deer of the British Socialist Party in Rawtenstall supported affiliation. In reply to those who suggested that the communists would be swept aside by the working class if it affiliated to the Labour Party he

wanted to stay inside - the BSP was an affiliate.

He wanted to suggest to the convention that the only possible chance we had of showing the workers that our viewpoint was different from that of the Labour Party was by remaining inside and fighting them on their own battle ground. Mr Jas Sexton [leading dockers' union official and ILP member - Ed] had made this comment at Scarborough a few weeks ago: "Here is the BSP with ten thousand alleged members, paying £50 a year affiliation fees. They monopolise the [Labour Party] Conference, get five speakers on the first day, demand a bloody revolution and Jim Thomas's head upon a charger, and then foist Malone upon us. What the hell do they want for fifty quid?" If there were any case for affiliation to the Labour Party, out of the mouth of Sexton we had that case.

We knew our case and could state it, and he (the speaker) emphatically denied that there was any possibility of our being mistaken as being either of them or with them. When the cry was raised in Russia of 'All power to the Soviets', what happened? Lenin wanted to get power out of the existing organisations, and his fight was with the reactionists who were inside those organisations. Our fight was with the same kind of people here, and to leave the workers to be gulled with the claptrap of Clynes, or the tomfoolery of Thomas was simply playing into their hands...

If we wanted to give the reactionists joy we should leave them. After we had gone they would say, "Thank God we have got rid of that element, now we can have quiet, peaceable and happy times." Another point was that if we left the Labour Party there was great danger of people who did not take our viewpoint posing as the left wing within the Labour Party. It had only been our attitude at Scarborough that had unmasked the MacDonalds, Hills and the rest who were posing as the left wing. It would interest those present to know that while they accepted John Hill as vice-president of the Hands Off Russia Committee, and agreed with him over industrial action so far as Russia was concerned, in negotiations on the standing orders of the Labour Party conference no man had tried to sabotage us more than he. We had to remain with these people in order to fight them.

... The millions of votes cast for the Labour Party at the last general election were votes given mainly by people who were dissatisfied, but did not quite know what they wanted. These were the people we had to show the way to; if we could not win them we could not win anyone.

We should retain our communist identity inside the Labour Party ... until such time as the Labour Party became a Labour Party with a communist mind - and this could be done, for what we said today our Labour leaders would have to say tomorrow - and inscribed on the Labour Party banner the sickle and the hammer of the communist movement.

W Mellor asked those delegates who had not come with mandates that could not be broken again to look at this question without any heat, to look at it from the point of view of expediency. We were not a collection of Machiavellis. We were a collection of people who disliked the Labour Party, and had very grave doubts as to whether modern trade unionism was the thing we were particularly keen upon.

But we were inside the capitalist system, inside every manifestation of that system, and one of those manifestations was parliament. The Labour Party - meaning thereby not the Parliamentary Labour Party, but the federation of trade unions, socialist societies, local Labour parties and cooperative societies - was a manifestation of the desire of the working class to take advantage of the parliamentary system. It was a collection of the various aspects of the labour movement on its industrial or consuming side, coming together to express in a political way certain desires and aspirations. The desires and aspirations of the present labour movement were something of which he had nothing to say; they were miles behind the things that we were aiming at, but they were the things for which the people of this country were asking.

We had to recognise that the revolution would not come unless we could get assent not to our principles, but to our tactics from the organised workers; that to be successful in our efforts to change society we must be in strategic positions ... if we as a Communist Party, beginning our career, cut ourselves off from the political expression of the labour movement of this country, without having examined whether the time had arrived to do so, we should rue the step ... our job was to see that any strategic position that was going was ours and that we were on the spot to get hold of it ... We must use every instrument there is ... we could not afford at the very beginning and creation of a revolutionary party in this country to lose the chance of taking advantage of every machine that the labour movement had created.

It was clear from the debate that when the vote was taken it would be a close run thing. As it turned out there was a slim 100 to 85 majority for affiliation - by prior agreement all delegates were bound by majority decisions. In this spirit a Provisional Executive Committee was formed by adding to the Joint Provisional Committee six new comrades: Fred Shaw, Bob Stewart, Dr DB Montefiore, CL Malone, George Deer and William Mellor. The convention also adopted Tentative proposals providing for transformation into the Communist Party, a document prepared by the old Joint Provisional Committee. This signified agreement with the drawing up of a draft constitution and rules, and the transformation of all the participating organisations and groups into the Communist Party of Great Britain.

## REVIEWS

### Utopian dreamers

Anarchist Communist Federation, *Marxism and its Failures*, Anarchist Communist Editions No.5, August 1990, pp31, 80p

OVER the years, Marxism has come under a barrage of critiques from all sorts of bourgeois and petty bourgeois ideologies, especially at the moment in this period of ideological reaction, when Marxism is apparently "dead". This pamphlet is the Anarchist Communist Federation's stab at a critique of Marxism. Quite frankly, it is as crude as they come.

The significance of this pamphlet is not that it comes from any great authority, but because when encountering youth in everyday communist work who are against the system in one way or another, one regularly finds the semi-anarchist view that communist politics, parties and leaders are generally a bad idea. This must be mainly due to the period. As youth are an important catchment area for Party recruitment, it is of great importance to fight these petty bourgeois ideas.

According to the ACF: "It is within Marx that the counterrevolutionary core of 'scientific socialism' is located" (preface). For Marx and Marxists one cannot begin to change society unless we have the best possible understanding of how society changes and develops. From our theory we can derive the necessary practical tasks. It is only in fact when we deviate from Marxism and shy away from practice do we become useless for revolution and eventually reactionary. Anarchism lacks scientific theory and therefore cannot gear itself to the necessary tasks of revolution, which renders it useless despite the sweetest sentiments. Just look at the role of anarchists within the Russian revolution and the Spanish civil war.

As one would expect, the pamphlet includes a section on the position of Marxists with regard to the state. "The state is seen from a Marxist perspective as an instrument of class rule. The trouble with this formulation is that there are plenty of occasions where the state acts in ways which hinder the pursuit of profit. Taxation, laws restricting the length of the working day, trade boycotts of the USSR etc" (p13).

This is a silly argument against the definition of the state as an instrument class rule. Of course the state can hinder the short term profitability of capitalism, but this is done in the interests of capitalism as a whole. For example, capitalism cannot function without a relatively healthy working class. This was why laws restricting the length of the working day were introduced. As for trade boycotts of the USSR, well that is just bloody obvious. Such economic caricatures of a Marxist conception of the state leave the ACF with egg all over its collective face.

The ACF finds this definition of the state objectionable because it implies that the working class will exercise its power through its own state. Of course any remnants of capitalism, eg the state, counterrevolutionaries, money, are undesirable after the revolution, but communists do not wish these things away unlike a certain petty bourgeois ideology that springs to mind. Communists understand that society must go through a period of transition that creates the conditions for communism.

We of the CPGB cannot overemphasise the necessity of a reformed Communist Party because it is a prerequisite for revolution. The ACF is, of course, unable to grasp this and attacks the concept of the Communist Party in the section entitled "Democratic centralism: a party for bureaucrats". It states: "As anarchists have argued for decades, 'revolutionary parties' tend to reproduce certain tendencies

inherent within themselves upon seizing state power. Authoritarian, hierarchical parties based on intolerance and discipline will bring about (despite a genuine desire to the contrary) authoritarian and intolerant societies" (p7); and also, "all of them [Leninist parties - JL] aspire to lead the revolution and if miraculously, as in Russia, they say the right things at the right times they may well find themselves in such a role" (p11).

Democratic centralism is our principle of organisation because it is the only method that enables us to be united in action in all periods of legality or illegality on the correct principles. The ACF can rightly criticise bureaucratic manoeuvring within parties, but sees this as something inherent within democratic centralism. In fact this is opportunism and a formal understanding of democratic centralism characteristic of 'official communism'. Such parties no longer or never have deserved to be categorised as Marxist, Leninist or communist.

In a society dominated by bourgeois ideas, revolutionaries, inside and out of parties are always prone to opportunism (of which anarchism is one form). Opportunism can only be combated by open discussion and self-criticism. This defines whether an organisation is serious about revolution or not.

Now, all this crap about the Russian revolution, past and future revolutions, being some sort of historical fluke, seems to be sour grapes on the part of the ACF, because anarchism has never got close and never will get close to making revolution and bringing about classless society. Communists have succeeded in the past and will in the future because of their theory, organisation and practice. We do not deny that in the past communists have made all sorts of errors, honest and dishonest, and committed crimes. But we have to be ruthlessly critical of the past and learn the lessons.

As for the ACF, it concludes that "if we don't want to remain isolated utopian dreamers we have to work with others in non-hierarchical and non-authoritarian organisations and federations" (p28). Sorry ACF, utopian dreamers you are and utopian dreamers you shall remain.

Josh Leaversuch.

### Another road

Callie Khouri (writer), Ridley Scott (director), *Thelma and Louise*

THELMA Dickinson is a bored housewife. Louise Sawyer is a no-nonsense coffee shop waitress. They are friends who decide that they want a weekend to get away from it all - namely their respective husband and boyfriend - in Louise's 66 T-Bird convertible. All set for a light sisterly comedy with glam girls in the driving seat? Sorry. No Hollywood romance or post-feminist fantasies here.

Ridley Scott's movie, starring Geena Davis and Susan Sarandon, is a buddy movie, except things do not work out for the two quite as expected, starting with their first stop at a roadside honky-tonk. Trouble is brewing as a potential rapist is shot, and Thelma and Louise hastily depart on a trip that will change their lives forever.

According to first-time screenwriter Callie Khouri, the story asks: "What could happen in the lives of two women that would force them to choose between what they had and what they might be able to have?" An event, or mistake, that forces them to take a journey into the unknown. *En route* they come into contact with all kinds of men, although, claims Khouri, the film is not anti-male. "It is just an

example to show that women are the more vulnerable of the species, not physically or mentally, but emotionally." The good, bad and indifferent are masculine aspects played by the characters here - the husband who treats his wife like a child; the lover who acts only in order to placate the situation; the sensitive detective; the cheating and insouciant cowboy hitch-hiker, and the contemptuous truck-driver, who they come into contact with throughout the journey, until they blast his truck and destroy his ego.

It is rich both in characterisations and storyline, involving rape, escape, sex and robbery. But it is the differences drawn between the two friends which works to make them more endearing and it is from here that the story takes its meaning. Once on the road the women, far from reacting hysterically, learn to lie and cheat, coping with the obstacles put in their way, created by the system they are struggling to be free of. Those obstacles also result from the relationships they have with the male characters they interact with, or without. But above all they guide each other through their ups and downs.

As the story unfolds the women get more than they bargained for, such as having a large number of police cars and at least one FBI helicopter on their tale. But they are having fun and learning to change things in their lives.

Known for the dangerous-to-know quality she flaunted in the recent *White Palace*, where she played a small-town waitress in the local burger bar, Sarandon says of *Thelma and Louise*, "It seemed to me that it was my job to give it some sort of moral underpinning, to literally and figuratively drive it. How do women become victims and men become the oppressors? In what proportion are we in complicity with men?"

That the film does not answer this, give a way out or even effectively pose it (unless you are attracted by the *dénouement*) does not necessarily detract from the film's enjoyment.

While the women hold the picture, it is the men they have encountered that direct the story and their next move, working as some kind of allegory. "This is where the film takes apart the whole male species," says the director. It would be missing the point, however, to see it as a female diatribe against men; it is a buddy movie, a tragic-comedy. But the film does use a definitely original line in its style with women and their emotions, on which the story is based.

Some critics have slated its supposedly anti-male stance and alleged dubious morality. It does not endear women to men, showing instead their inner strengths, not against the men, but the lifestyle in which these men live. Ridley Scott says of the men, "We need to accept that those men are out there - on different levels, of course. Those men are us."

Khouri was asked whether the film stereotypes men and is anti-male; she claims that normally it is the women who are stereotyped as only having four roles to play: as being the supportive love interest, sex object, victim or recently, psycho killer. She asks if these are perceived as anti-female, and believes "nobody ever says they are". She adds that the men are not uniformly offensive or one-dimensional characters. Just as they are seen to be many a problem for Thelma and Louise, so too do the women have their flaws.

Thelma had married young and was unhappy; Louise was unmarried and unhappy. They ended up in the same circumstances, different, happy, strong. Because it is an allegorical story, its ending is heroic. Given their options, they made heroic choices. The alternative was to surrender and go to prison.

With echoes of *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* there are hints of how the story will end throughout the trip, but it doesn't suffer predictability as new influences enter their lives with every stop they make.

Sarah Williams

## ACTION

### Communist Party

London Seminars: 5pm Sundays. Details 071-431 3135.

This seminar series provides collective discussion to assist the CPGB Provisional Central Committee in drawing up its Draft Programme, section by section. The Draft Programme will be published subsequently for discussion within the class, as a guide to action and as a rallying point for the re-forging of the Communist Party of Great Britain. Join in the debate. Fight to forge the weapon of the proletarian party in Britain. (The second part of each seminar is a weekly discussion on current political developments.):

August 4: Lesbians and gays.

August 11: Small businesses and farmers.

August 18: The character of the revolution in Britain.

August 25: Classes in the revolution

Posters (A2) and stickers: "Leninism Lives!" and "CPGB".

Ring 071-431 3135, or send donation with order to our box number.

Irish Freedom Movement anti-internment demonstration:

Saturday August 10: Join the CPGB contingent on the anti-internment march in London. Troops out now! Self determination for the Irish nation! Assemble 1.00pm at Islington Town Hall (rear), Upper Street, N1. Nearest tube: Highbury and Islington.

### Hands Off Ireland!

HO! T-Shirts: Be the sharpest anti-imperialist on your street. T-shirts, all extra large, £6 each (including p&p) from our box number.

London: activist meetings and actions. Details 071-431 3135.

### Workers Theatre Movement

WTM club *The Internationale*: Venue: Old Piano Warehouse, Hawley Road, Camden Town, NW1 (Camden Town tube). Admission £3, unwaged £2. Theatre, music, dance, poetry. Doors open 8.00pm.

Performers for WTM Club *The Internationale* please contact Tam on 071-431 3135.

Rehearsals: Every Sunday in London. Phone Tam on 071-431 3135 or write to WTM, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX for details of WTM activities.

### Unemployed Workers Charter

UWC LOBBY OF TUC - 1991

●'Eye of Conference' social - music, theatre and comedy. Maryhill Arts Centre (£4 employed/£1 with UB40), Sunday September 1, from 7.30pm.

●Lobby of the TUC, Monday September 2, from 9am - Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre, Finnieston, Glasgow G3.

●Fringe meeting - 12 noon (see next issue of *Unemployed Organiser* for details - 20p each plus 10p p&p. Send for details of bulk order rates).

Send SAE for UWC petition to TUC and sponsorship letter.

London mobilising meeting for lobby: For details ring 071-431 3135.

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For more details see page two

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## Revolutionary Communist Party Academics in retreat

Once it was preparing for power. Now all it can do is look towards the year 2000. What originated within today's Socialist Workers Party has developed its own theory of the downturn

**T**HE REVOLUTIONARY Communist Party is an organisation that is feeling the stresses and strains of the present period of reaction profoundly.

Even before taking a closer look at the RCP's practice and justifying theory, one can detect superficial signs of stagnation. The RCP is no longer 'Preparing for Power' annually at its summer school, but cogitates 'Towards 2000'. Even in a period of reaction, which no organisation can escape, communists are still preparing for power, as all communist work is preparing for power in one way or another. Or maybe the RCP powers that be just fancied a change.

*The Next Step*, the RCP's one time campaigning paper, has shrunk to a four page A4 size "party bulletin". The RCP has put all its eggs into the basket of *Living Marxism* and is perhaps taking a road running parallel with that of *Marxism Today*, as one ex-RCP supporter indicated in our letters page (*The Leninist* No 104-5, June 28 1991). He remembers "somebody writing in to *The Next Step* saying that *Living Marxism* could be a financial and political disaster, as *The Next Step* would be downgraded and the RCP would cease to intervene in political struggles. The powers-that-be insisted this would not happen; *The Next Step* would continue to function as normal and there would not be a *Marxism Today* II. Look what happened! Spot the mugs..."

The RCP's politics are characterised by dismissing movements in the working class. After all, if it can dismiss these movements it has no need to take part in them, and can continue its own political project undisturbed. One only has to take a look at its theory and practice over the last couple of years. One of the most important issues in this period must be the poll tax.

"Poll tax is not a class issue" proclaimed the RCP, because it recognised "that in the current state of politics in Britain it is impossible to organise a working class campaign against the tax. In the absence of an already existing vibrant opposition, any cross class campaign such as the one against the poll tax will inevitably be dominated by the middle class" (*The Next Step*, March 15 1991). The poll tax campaign mobilised in total many hundreds of thousands on to the streets. Fourteen million refused to pay.

In Scotland at present, approximately two thirds of the population have not paid the not quite dead tax. This opposition to the tax was obviously not "vibrant" enough for the RCP. To claim the anti-poll tax campaign was dominated by the middle class is rubbish; it was initiated and dominated by the working class. If anything is dominated by the middle class, it is the RCP.

Of course, the strategy put forward by the likes of Militant left the struggle on the level of mass non-payment. This

tended to individualise the struggle and made it difficult to draw the vast numbers of non-payers into action. The RCP's answer? After a short period of attempting to organise its own campaign in Glasgow, it gave up on resisting the poll tax and adopted its present position, which it had never argued for previously.

Despite opportunist leadership, it was the duty of communists to advance the struggle by fighting for what was necessary - communist leadership with working class strategy within the existing anti-poll tax movement.

For us this obviously meant working within anti-poll tax unions, with a perspective of turning them into higher forms of working class organisation, ie councils of action, and campaigning for strike action up to and including a general strike. For the RCP, once it had dismissed the poll tax, it boycotted the anti-poll tax unions just as it had boycotted the miners' support groups in the Great Strike of 1984-5.

It would seem that the RCP feels far more comfortable with the working class in retreat than on the offensive. This is because the RCP has no organic links with the working class - a product of having no effective political orientation to it - and is thus left behind when the working class is on the move.

We have polemicised against the Irish Freedom Movement, the Irish solidarity front of the RCP, on a number of occasions for its boycottism of actions of the Irish solidarity movement. Any organisation that claims a principled position of 'troops out now' must show this in its practice. Otherwise it is doing a disservice to the struggle for Irish freedom. In an open letter to the IFM from Hands Off Ireland! published in *The Leninist* February 5 1990, HOI! chronicled the boycottism of the IFM and rightly denounced it for this. Perhaps this polemic did not fall on deaf ears, as the IFM temporarily pulled its socks up and organised a decent but not extravagant contingent on the Easter 1990 demonstration organised by HOI!

So has the IFM actually turned over a new leaf, dropping its sectarian baggage, learned from its past errors and been openly self critical? In a word, no.

On March 30 1991, the Irish in Britain Representation Group organised its 'Spirit of 1916' march. Where was the IFM? God knows. Well, it was not entirely absent: there were two IFMers selling their publication at the assembly point. When asked as to the whereabouts of an IFM contingent, one of our comrades was told that the IFM had been instructed not to attend the march. Presumably the two IFMers had broken the discipline of their organisation. Naturally, HOI! did not boycott the demonstration, we mobilised the largest contingent.

HOI! organised its second annual Easter demonstration this year, the 75th anniversary of the Easter Rising of 1916. The march was based on the principled slogans 'Troops out now'

and 'Self determination for the Irish nation'. What did the IFM do? Yes, you guessed it, they boycotted. What possible excuse could the IFM have to boycott this demonstration? After all, it had mobilised for it the year before. The IFM actually sent three people to the march, but as we noted in the 'And' column of *The Leninist*, they "speedily repaired to the local 'greasy spoon' before the march moved off". The IFM has got a nerve calling itself "the most active solidarity organisation in Britain"!

The IFM is at present mobilising for its demonstration on August 10. We would not dream of boycotting it because it was not our own. In fact we have been working to build the demonstration. We do not pay lip service to the Irish solidarity movement and are determined to build the movement that is necessary.

The Walton by-election has just passed us, with Militant's failure to get a sizeable chunk of the vote. We pointed out that standing outside the Labour Party as the 'Real' thing - and outside its own programme - tends to prove Militant's political project of building a socialist Labour Party is null and void. Standing on a left reformist platform, Leslie Mahmood was appealing to a subjectively anti-capitalist vote for socialism. In the context of the struggle brewing among Liverpool council workers, Mahmood versus Kilfoyle represented for or against striking workers, support for, or opposition to, poll tax resistance. This made Leslie Mahmood worthy of our critical support. From here our aim was to raise the need for the only real alternative to Labour, a reformed CPGB.

So, in contrast, we can take a look at what the RCP was doing during all this. To begin with, travelling theoretically light, the RCP is finding life somewhat uncomfortable in coming to terms with reality. We will never let it forget its description of the Labour Party as "dead", or its modification that "Labourism is dead". The latest variation on this theme from the RCP is that "both the Labour Party and the left appear increasingly irrelevant to the real political problems of the 1990s" while it still maintains in the same article that "Kinnock may win a general election - though this largely depends on the pace of the destructive tendencies in the Conservative Party" (*The Next Step* July 5). How does an "irrelevant" party win a general election? Answers on a postcard, please. More importantly, is the Labour Party no longer the main expression of bourgeois ideas within the working class? Such a dismissal of the Labour Party is clearly cretinous. In the RCP's bid to be different, it has reproduced the opportunism of many before it.

Reading through past RCP literature (something we would recommend RCP supporters do) it really does strike you how disposable its theory is.

For instance, in Britain do we live in a situation of "two party politics in a one party state" or does Labour occasionally take office, as it looks like doing at the next general election? For the RCP this is because "meaningful debate is confined within one party [the Tories]" (*Living Marxism*, August 1990). Maybe British Airways, which withdrew funding from the Tories, is just making new friends when it 'talks' to the Labour Party. Perhaps John Smith, shadow chancellor, is also doing the same, as he has been talking to the capitalists. With the Tories in a shambles, the likes of *The Economist* and the *Financial Times* are offering their advice on policy refinements that will tailor Labour to fit the requirements of the capitalists. This analysis by the RCP is an attempt to make reality fit the requirements of its theory.

After the Liberal Democrats won the Ribble by-election *The Next Step* told us we had a return to "three party politics" (presumably still in a one party state!). The Liberals, since the Labour Party was formed, have not been capable of winning a general election, only stealing votes or the odd seat from Labour or the Tories. We have never had three party politics in any real sense.

For the RCP, Kinnock represents "new style Labour" and Militant or 'Real Labour' is the "old style". This is simply not the case. What is actually going on inside the Labour Party is the continued development of the contradiction between left and right reformism. Forcing reality into the shape of its 'theory', after dismissing Labourism as "dead", the rising fortunes of a presumably reincarnated Labour Party poses certain difficulties.

After all, who funds Labour? Why does Kinnock talk of his pride in being a member of the TGWU at the union's conference? If Labour is the reincarnated "new style" that has been able to do this by cutting "its traditional ties with the unions" (which it clearly has not) then 'Real Labour' must be the return of the living dead.

The RCP has stated that: "There are in fact two battles going on in Liverpool. The first is between the working class on one side and the Labour council and the Tory government on the other."

"The second is the internal squabble in the Labour Party between old fashioned Labourites (such as Mahmood) and the new style Kinnock supporters (like Kilfoyle). We have every interest in taking sides in the first struggle but none at all in the second" (*The Next Step*). So the RCP called a boycott of the by-election, and proceeded to drive around Walton with a megaphone sloganising to this end as its contribution.

What the RCP conveniently does not realise is that these "two struggles" are interlinked. The workers struggle finds its expression in an impure form in the left reformism of 'Real Labour', not the Labour Party plain and simple. So one cannot support the workers' struggle

without critically supporting Real Labour. How can we emphasise the need for the only real alternative - a reformed CPGB - if we are isolated from those workers.

For a communist organisation possessing any sort of strength, participation in elections is obligatory. This was a condition of affiliation to the Comintern. Elections are an excellent opportunity to propagandise, to expose the sham of bourgeois democracy and gauge one's strength. To boycott such an opportunity is disgraceful - unless perhaps in a revolutionary situation, which we are obviously not faced with at the minute.

If the RCP had any political honesty, it would have stood its own candidate on its own platform. Maybe this would at least have had the merit of being an honest mistake, but political honesty is something we have grown not to expect from the RCP. Incidentally, the RCP actually did stand candidates in the 1987 general election, but that was in the RCP's more active days. The boycott of the Walton by-election by the RCP was just childish sectarianism and a further development in its retreat from practice.

This is forcefully shown in the August edition of *Living Marxism*. Here, in the context of the ongoing struggles in Liverpool, the journal's editor Mick Hume unfolds for his readers the RCP's fighting strategy for the working class: "Our proposal is this ... we emphasise the need to develop a new generation of anti-capitalist ideas, not because we are erudite academics, but because we recognise that such an intellectual breakthrough is the precondition for making practical progress."

In other words, nothing can be done, so take out a sub to *LM* and come to 72. The working class will just have to accept the fact that, without the leadership of the RCP, it will have to make do with defeat. 'Not erudite' is right. Marxism, as a living body of theory, develops through active intervention within the working class. It is the theory of revolutionary practice. For the RCP's glossy house journal, *Living Marxism* could not be a less apt name.

Revolutionaries in and around the RCP should take a long, hard look at their organisation. It suffered its first self inflicted festering opportunist wound a long time ago. It is only a matter of time before it becomes gangrenous and the RCP thoroughly reactionary. Revolutionaries around the RCP and all communists in Britain should be looking towards the Provisional Central Committee of the CPGB for their lead. To paraphrase the words of leading RCP member Mike Freeman, in an article way back when, those RCP supporters looking for genuinely communist answers know where to find us.

Josh Leaversuch



# **Unemployed** **ORGANISER**

Paper of the Unemployed Workers Charter, Issue No 8

## **Lobby of the TUC** **Monday September 2** **9am till 11am**

Outside Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre, Finnieston, Glasgow G3.  
Sponsors of lobby include London Region Ucat, Construction Safety Campaign, Mildred Gordon MP, Communist Party of Great Britain.

## **UWC demands:**

- **End all collaboration with Tory cheap labour schemes!**
- **Fight all harassment of the unemployed!**
- **Organise the unemployed!**
- **Fight for real jobs with real pay!**
- **Back the fight against British militarism!**

## **Eve of TUC concert and social - Sunday, September 1**

Maryhill Arts Centre, Burgh Hall, Gairbraid Avenue, 6pm till late. Music, comedy and theatre. £4 waged, £1 unwaged.

## **Fringe meeting 1pm-2pm**

Waverly Bar, Broomielaw (three minutes walk from Centre)

For details of coaches from London, write to UWC, BCM Box 928, London, WC1N 3XX or phone 081-459 7146



## Unemployed Workers Charter

BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX. Tel: 081-459 7146

### Lobby the TUC! September 2, Glasgow

The UWC is calling for a lobby by the unemployed and their supporters of the TUC in Glasgow on the first day of its 1991 conference. Our lobby will be demanding:

- End all collaboration with Tory cheap labour schemes!
- Fight all harassment of the unemployed!
- Organise the unemployed!
- Fight for real jobs with real pay!
- Back the fight against British militarism!

We are demanding that the TUC ends all its disgraceful collaboration with Tory cheap labour schemes. We are demanding that they end their treacherous silence on vicious attacks on the unemployed's right to claim benefit such as the "actively seeking work" clause. We are demanding that they move to end the deadly cycle that sees unemployed youth end up in the British Army, fighting other ordinary working class youth like themselves.

But what is the point of lobbying the TUC, many people ask us. After all, since the Tories came to power in 1979, the TUC has shown itself to be less than useless in defending any section of the working class employed or unemployed.

Willis and his team sold the miners down the river. They left the printers to fight alone. Health workers have had nothing but token gestures for their heroic struggle to defend jobs, conditions and levels of health care provision. Recently, the fat cats of Congress House threw their weight behind the British establishment's bloody war in the Middle East and from year to year they maintain a disgraceful silence on the British occupation of Ireland.

So why bother with them at all? Aren't we sowing illusions in them?

If we just begged the TUC to do this, to do that, then we would certainly be guilty of the TUC disease - *wind-baggery*.

But the UWC does not just wait around for the TUC cavalry to come to rescue us. We place demands on the TUC, but get on with the job ourselves. Our annual lobby of the TUC therefore gives a clear message to the bureaucrats - either take up your responsibilities to the working class, including the unemployed section of it, or get out of the way for those who will!

These are the details of the UWC lobby that are available so far. For more, see the next issue of *UO* or phone us on the number above.

● **Eve of TUC concert and social** - Sunday, September 1. Maryhill Arts Centre, Burgh Hall, Gairbraid Avenue, 6pm till late. Music, comedy and theatre. £4 waged, £1 unwaged.

● **UWC lobby** - Monday September 2, from 9am till 11am. Outside Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre, Finnieston, Glasgow G3. Sponsors of lobby include London Region Ucat, Construction Safety Campaign, Mildred Gordon MP, Communist Party of Great Britain.

● **UWC fringe meeting** - Waverly Bar, Broomielaw (three minutes walk from Centre), 1pm-2pm

We need to make sure that this year's lobby is the biggest and best yet! Make sure *you* are there!

### Urgent Appeal!

The cost to the UWC of staging this year's lobby is enormous. We are taking at least one coach from London on August 30 filled with UWC supporters. These comrades will then work in Glasgow over the weekend raising money and support for our organisation. They need to be fed and given shelter in Glasgow. The round trip from London alone is costing us well over £1,200, quite apart from all the inevitable costs of putting on such a large event.

The UWC has no source of funding apart from the work of its own members and the support of the working class movement. We receive no grants from government quangos anxious to compromise our independence. Every penny we spend, we earn through hard, principled work in the trade union branches and on the streets.

With the growth of unemployment, new opportunities are opening up every day for the UWC to take its message of militant struggle out to the people that need to hear it. But for that we need far more resources.

You can help by:

- Sending us a donation towards the costs of the lobby.
- Send off for one of our standing order forms to make a regular donation, no matter how small, to the work of the UWC.
- Arrange for a UWC speaker for your trade union branch to explain how and why the employed should support the fight of the out-of-work.

Subscription rates: Britain and Ireland £3 for twelve issues, Europe £10; Rest of World £13 (airmail £20.50). Institutions £20; European Institutions £30. Send us for list of back issues and other publications. Cheques payable to Unemployed Workers Charter. Printed by: Multiline Systems Ltd, 22-24 Powell Road, London E5 (081-985 3753). Published by: November Publications Ltd, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX (071-431 3135). Copyright July 1991 ISSN 0262-1649

## In Action!

### Honouring Jack Dash



Pictured left to right: Mark Fischer (National Organiser UWC), Kuthleen Gander (Jack's daughter), Alfred Kyper (family friend and printer made redundant after battles at Wapping), Terry Ahearn (life long friend of Jack's and retired printer)

On Saturday June 8, the Unemployed Workers Charter organised a wreath ceremony on the River Thames to commemorate the death of our friend and comrade, Jack Dash.

Jack Dash was an outstanding rank and file dockers' leader, veteran of the National Unemployed Workers Movement and a principled communist. Our all too brief association with this great man was an inspiration to all comrades and friends of the UWC.

At the ceremony Mark Fischer, for the UWC, recalled the inspiration that Jack had left behind him as his most precious legacy:

"Jack's indomitable fighting spirit, his steadfast support for the fight for human dignity and liberation, his energy and resolve in fighting for that cause - the finest cause in the world. These are the things that Jack left behind him to inspire a whole new generation of militants who will take up the fight where Jack left off."

"Today there are some in the workers' movement who want to forget that legacy, to bury the memory of men like Jack Dash and what he stood for. We and all those genuinely committed to the cause of the working class will never allow that to happen!"

The commemoration received good wishes from Ron Todd, Bill Morris and Arthur Scargill, amongst others. Also, Harry Watson, the ex-President of the Watermen's Lightermen's and Tugman's Union - an important old craft union on the docks at one time - wrote to us after the event congratulating the UWC, but making one point:

"The only difference I have lies in the timing of the event. My feeling in such matters boils down to making memorable in the sense of Jack's birth rather than his death. We should celebrate his birthday and arrival in the industry, with all the positive consequences that ensued thereafter. *Something to be happy about!*"

"I hope you all keep well. Events are moving towards a general election and hopefully a Labour majority in consequence. What happens after that will largely depend on the strength and clear-sightedness of organisations such as the UWC."

"My warm regards to you all."

For copies of Jack's inspiring autobiography, *Good Morning Brothers!* (£4 plus 50p p&p), write to UWC Books, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX.

### Unemployment is a Killer!



Findings published in the British Journal of Psychiatry last year revealed that the suicide rate in the Republic of Ireland increased from 1.75 per 100,000 in 1970 to eight per 100,000 in 1985. The study says that there is "a very marked relationship" between suicide and unemployment. The annual report of the Galway branch of the Samaritans backs this up. Suicide, they write, is now second only to cancer as a killer in the Republic of Ireland. A spokesperson for the Galway Samaritans told *Unemployed Organiser*: "We have a high number of unemployed in the Republic. When you talk about numbers and statistics - for example 11,000 people phoned us here in Galway last year - we tend to lose track of the fact that each one of those calls is a person, an individual. Every unemployed person is isolated, their self-esteem has gone, aside from all the practical problems that are associated with being out of work. It is shattering."

\* 254,000 are officially registered unemployed in Ireland. Unemployment is rising and it is estimated that if it were not for the traditional form of Irish 'safety valve' of emigration (110,000 have quit Ireland since PNR was signed), the figures would stand at an incredible 28%!

\* Around 70,000 workers are on the FAS 'training' schemes which operate much like our cheap labour schemes - ET and YT - over here. These schemes help 'massage' the real unemployed figures.

Certainly it is shocking to read that unemployment as a killer is second only to cancer in Ireland. But then, the UWC says unemployment is a *form* of cancer, a cancer caused by capitalism in every part of the world. The only known cure is the type of militant fightback organised by the UWC. This can give the unemployed a sense of pride, of their own worth, of the fact that there is a collective answer to the evils of unemployment and it can and must be fought for.

Our pictured shows Mark Fischer and Adam Levy laying a wreath at the Irish embassy for the unemployed of Ireland driven to suicide by their plight.

### Death on site

Supporters of the UWC attended the annual general meeting of the Construction Safety Campaign in June. The construction industry is one of the most dangerous industries to work in, with around 150 deaths - an average of three a week - and 20,000 injuries reported each year. As a resolution to the AGM pointed out, these horrendous levels of deaths and injuries are only tolerated because "many thousands of building workers are under extreme financial pressure to work in unsafe and unhealthy conditions, because they receive no state benefits when out of work."

The UWC pointed out that our fight to organise the unemployed therefore had direct relevance to the fight for decent levels of safety on building sites. Organised, the unemployed will not be the potential threat that they are now to workers in the industry - building workers would not have to look over their shoulder constantly to make sure that some desperate unemployed person took their job. They would be able get on with the fight in the industry. The conference sponsored the UWC lobby of the TUC on September 2 and we are looking forward to working closely with the CSC in the future.

The CSC can be contacted c/o Tony O'Brien, 52 Ansdell Road, Peckham, London SE15. CSC T' Shirts available from the same address, cost £5 (plus 50p p&p)

### Spot the recession

What a funny job being an economist must be. The *Financial Times* (May 7) reports on forecasts for the British economy from 21 City institutions, private sector economists and "intergovernmental bodies". As the *FT* points out, "having failed to spot the recession coming, economists are now engaged in the perilous process of forecasting a recovery." Well, some are, some aren't. "What is now preoccupying the profession is when the recovery will start, what will stimulate it, and how long and strong it will be. Some ... are questioning whether there will be a recovery at all." Bear all that in mind next time you hear a Tory cite 'evidence' for a economic recovery. It's about as scientific as forecasting plagues of frogs.

### Cooking the books

The Unemployment Unit's independent assessment of the levels of unemployment takes into account some of the 30 plus fiddles the Tories have made since their election in 1979. According to this measure, unemployment is 1,045,700 higher than the official count. The official count gives an unemployment rate of 7.7% of the workforce in employment, while the Unemployment Unit's estimate is a minimum of 11.1%. According to official statistics, the number of

### WRITE OR RING

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## In Action!

unemployed people increased by 84,100 in April. But this figure fails to take into account the 1991 Census. According to the Unemployment Unit, some 32,000 of the 120,000 census workforce were unemployed claimants temporarily recruited. Without this short term feature, the figure could possibly have been as high as 115,000. This would have been the highest monthly rise ever recorded.

### Welcome to capitalism!

Eastern Germany's chemical industry must cut up to 80% of its workforce to survive competition. Figures released in May showed that unemployment in the eastern part of the newly united Germany has risen to 9.5% of the labour force. Elsewhere in the ex-socialist countries, unemployment is soaring. In the rest of Europe, the twelve countries of the European Community have between them over 15 million unemployed people, 55% of whom have been out of work for twelve months or more. Welcome to capitalism, comrades ...

### A Runaway Failure

Less than a third of unemployed people participating in the Tories' Job Interview Guarantee Scheme (JIGS) (also known as work trails) have actually been placed in a job. The bosses guarantee a job interview to unemployed people who work for them - free of charge - for a 'trial period' lasting up to three weeks. During that time, the unemployed person remains on benefit and receive no extra cash apart from travel and meals. *Counter Claim*, the journal of Merseyside Welfare Rights Centre thought that "it is doubtful whether the scheme will be more widely available" after its initial pilot tests ended in the summer. But the *Financial Times* (May 1) reported that this shoddy attempt to get cheap labour in small doses "is to be extended throughout the UK", so keep your eyes peeled for it in your area ...

### Problems ... and possibilities

A new book by the Policy Studies Institute sheds light on some of the problems we face in fighting for organisation amongst the unemployed - *The Unemployed Flow*, by WW Daniel.

Daniel points out that the composition of the unemployed is constantly changing. They do not have a sense of common identity, of all being in the same boat and thus needing to organise together to improve conditions.

The large majority of unemployed people coming onto the unemployed registers:

- \* Tend to be unskilled
  - \* Have little formal education
  - \* Lost their last job - often from small, non-unionised firms - without a large redundancy payment
  - \* Have had a series of such jobs
- Unemployed skilled workers tend to get jobs quicker, but different ones and often at a lower rate of pay.

Certainly, the UWC knows that work amongst the unemployed is not easy. But the very fact of the

numbers of people relegated to the 'periphery' of the workforce means we have a huge sea to swim in. While they may lack the experience of tradition working class organisation, the unemployed of today are not hampered by traditional and the bureaucratic outlook that sometimes holds back other sections of the organised working class. The UWC will spread the idea of organisation amongst the unemployed - and when they move, it will be spectacular!

### Thanks a lot ...

The Tories' jibe that young workers 'price themselves out of jobs' have been echoed by a recent report from ... the GMB, one of Britain's biggest general unions! The government have already removed legislation that sets minimum wages for young workers. But with 'help' like this from the likes of the leadership of the GMB, who needs the Tories ...?

### Pulling Out

The government have had yet another blow to their 'guarantee' to find a 'training place' for every 16-19 year old who "wants one" (in other words, who have no choice in the matter). Several large public companies, including Midland Bank and Mothercare, are pulling out of the cheap labour scheme Youth Training. The bureaucratic bother of negotiating local contracts with the 82 Training and Enterprise Councils and the 22 Local Enterprise Companies that were set up to replace central administration has proved too much given the unspectacular returns.

### Solidarity and Safety

Members of the CPSA (the union for lower paid civil servants) have been taking strike action to demand effective measures to protect them from assault by claimants. Bristol and London's Forest Hill staff have been on strike since April and workers in many other areas are also up in arms. What workers in this industry are protesting against specifically is the government's new "open plan unemployment benefit offices."

Open-plan offices are a move in the government's attempts to hive off dole offices to "agency" status bodies. But as Lee Rock, Branch secretary of Kilburn CPSA wrote in the latest issue of *Trade Union News*, "in the current climate of soaring unemployment, the idea of smooth building society style offices for claiming the dole looks increasingly sick. The CPSA strikers are calling for a return to the counters and screens which at least provide honest protection - and in the long term, for the kind of policies which would take away the need for barriers against the poor and oppressed."

There is no doubt that there is a serious potential threat to the workers in the front line of the government's assaults on the unemployed. In an open plan UBO in Lisson Grove this June, an angry claimant attacked and seriously

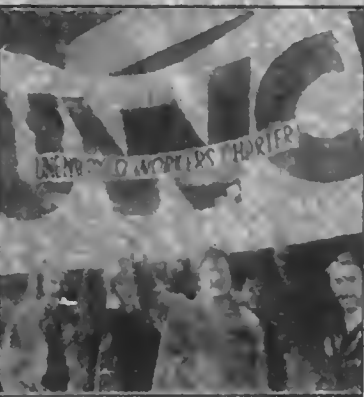
beat the office's supervisor. This was the culmination of a whole series of attacks that have occurred since the UBO went open plan in March. All unemployed people could give examples from their own personal experience where it has only been the barrier of screens and counters that have prevented serious violence between staff and claimants.

So the UWC supports the fight of the CPSA workers as a short term solution.

As Lee Rock writes, these open plan offices are part of the government's drive to 'reorganise' the civil service into "Executive Agencies". This would involve the loss of thousands of jobs, the scrapping of established union conditions and agreements.

Unemployed workers therefore have every interest in standing with the CPSA members in their fight. But in the longer term, the solution to the attacks on staff must be the spread of militant working class organisation amongst the unemployed. Then they won't simply be isolated, powerless victims of the system who blindly lash out at whatever, or whoever, is in front of them.

Organisation of the unemployed is directly, is immediately, in the interests of workers in the civil service and they should support the only organisation fighting to make that idea a reality - the UWC!



Standing together: The UWC joins striking CPSA members outside Marylebone UBO in 1988

### Unemployed Against Fascism!

A number of fascists recently tried to disrupt a joint Unemployed Workers Charter/Hands Off Ireland picket of an Army Recruitment Office in London called to highlight the link between unemployment and recruitment to the British Army. We hear from comrades in Anti-Fascist Action that these peices of human filth are increasing their activities at the moment, particularly in the East End of London.

If some appear to sell their filth outside your UBO, let us know. While we should not exaggerate the importance of these lard-head - most of whom would be flat out counting to ten - it is important that we deal swiftly and efficiently with them. If you spot any trying to peddle their filth to the unemployed, give us a call and together we can arrange for a sharp tap on the snouts to put them off.

## IN FOCUS

### Keeping an eye on 'em

#### YT - Same Crap, Different Initials Part 1

Youth Training (YT) replaced the Youth Training Scheme (YTS) on May 29 1990. The so-called Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) in England and Wales and the Local Enterprise Companies (LECs) in Scotland gradually took control of the delivery of ET at a local level.

The first 10 TECs were launched on April 3 1990 and a network of about 102 TECs/LECs should be operational by the end of 1991. They will be run by boards dominated by local private sector bosses. Over coming issues of *Unemployed Organiser*, we will summarise some of the minimum terms and conditions trainees have a right to. We stress that these are just minimum terms and conditions: if we organise collectively, we can win far more from the TECs/LECs. Contact the UWC for details of our campaign work against the Tories' cheap labour schemes.



Don't believe the hype ...

When you start YT you should be given a Personal Training Plan. This will give details of your training programme and your intended qualification

Your training will usually be a mixture of 'on the job', eg work experience and 'off the job' eg college. All the training has to be relevant to your employment need. There is now no specified time that you must spend training off the job.

While you are training on the job there should be someone to supervise you close by. You should not be used as cheap labour or left on your own for long periods doing repetitive tasks.

Most unemployed 16 and 17 year olds can not get Income Support. Instead the government claims to guarantee a place on YT. This means that if you are unemployed, YT may be the only way you can get any sort of income. If, however, at any time you have no money because a suitable YT place cannot be found for you, you should make a claim for Income Support at your nearest Social Security Office. You may not get money, but there is a chance. And your chances will be improved if you contact the UWC to fight for you.

If you are on YT you are either a non-employed trainee or an employed trainee. You must be informed in writing by your YT Provider when you start YT if you are a non-employed trainee or an employed trainee. You must also be told promptly if your status changes while you are on YT. Any change should be subject to your agreement. Non-employed trainees must:

- be informed in writing about the arrangements under which they are participating in YT
- have a Personal Training Plan
- receive a training allowance
- be given the rights of a non-employed trainee

Employed trainees must:

- have a written statement of terms and conditions of employment within 13 weeks of starting the job
- be informed in writing about the arrangement under which they are participating in YT
- have a Personal Training Plan
- receive a wage
- be given a pay slip which shows your wages before and after deductions for National Insurance, tax, etc
- have the rights of an employee

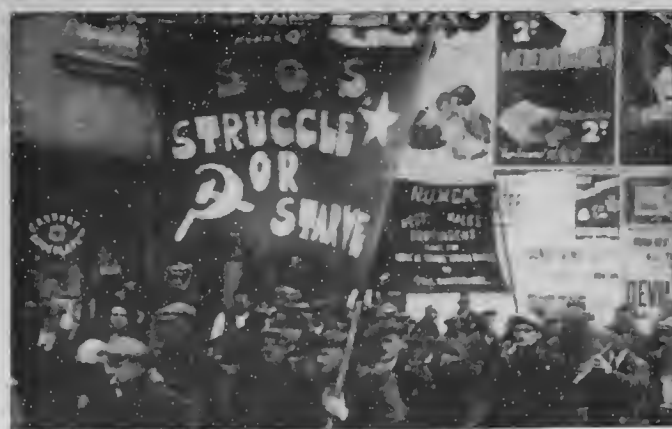
In the next issue of *Unemployed Organiser*, we look at your rights on YT itself. But don't just hang around and wait for that. The moment you join YT you should:

- i) Join the trade union in your workplace. Some trade unions offer free membership or low rates for YT trainees. Others don't, so whatever else you do ...
- ii) Get in contact with the UWC for details of our fight for a square deal for all trainees.



## BLAST FROM THE PAST

# Learning the lessons of the Rhonddda



The UWC always emphasises the fact that fighting unity between employed and unemployed workers is of benefit to both groups. These two extracts from *We Refuse to Starve in Silence - the History of the National Unemployed Workers Movement* underlines our point. This excellent book by Richard Croucher is available from Lawrence & Wishart, 39 Museum Street, London WC1A - £6.95

"As the General Strike approached, the National Unemployed Workers Committee Movement [NUWCM - the UWC of its day] constantly linked the struggles of the employed and the unemployed. A large demonstration which took place in the spring of 1926 in Porth, South Wales, was a typical example. Processions from Tonyrefail, Llynypia, the Rhonddda Fach and Upper Rhonddda converged on Porth on Sunday afternoon in protest at a reduction in unemployed relief by the Pontypridd Guardians. The Rhonddda Fach contingent started off in Maerdy (where there was a strong unemployed committee) with 400 men

and 100 women, their silver band at the front. As the procession wound through the continuous band of scarcely separated pit villages, it grew until it was half a mile long. Tylorstown's banner was revealing, depicting as it did a wartime scene with a wounded soldier adjacent to another tableau showing the same soldier begging for a job. Other banners carried slogans: 'All Power to the Workers', 'Death before Starvation'. In Porth, the large crowd was addressed by the fiery Maerdy communist Arthur Horner, who proposed resolutions calling for the Miners' Federation and TUC to resist any attempt to increase the miners' hours or re-

duce their pay. Horner stressed the link between the two issues: the mining communities were under attack by the class enemy, and had to be met with a united response.

The NUWCM played its part in the General Strike of 1926. In many areas, unemployed delegates sat on strike committees, and many local studies pay tribute to the part that they played in trying to prevent strike breaking" (...)

"During 1934, the NUWM had forged new links with the South Wales Miners' Federation (SWMF) as its branches had played a key role in helping the miners' union in its campaign to

crush the company union which remained in existence in the area. In this determined struggle to eliminate the company union .. the enemy was clear. In the protracted dispute at the Taff-Merthyr colliery, the NUWM leafleted, picketed and recruited to a new unemployed miners' lodge, earning it the vilification of the company. NUWM branches outside of Bedlinog (Taff Merthyr's colliery village) sat on committees of the SWMF established to stop blacklegging of employed or unemployed by nipping it in the bud. It was little wonder, then, that NUWM Circulars were already praising the 'very excellent' situation in Bedlinog, where

the NUWM and the SWMF were virtually synonymous. This unity was to bear fruit in the massive demonstrations which swept South Wales after ... January 7 1935. South Wales was at the centre of a national ferment ... on January 13, 100,000 marched in the Rhonddda, and between then and the end of the month, 150,000 participated in the NUWM-led marches throughout Britain. But South Wales was the storm centre. On February 3, 300,000 people demonstrated throughout South Wales. The scale of the upsurge was truly enormous."

## READ THIS!

Now you've read *Unemployed Organiser*, you need to get involved in the practical work of the UWC!

I would like to join the UWC lobby of the TUC ☐  
(See editorial for details)

We would like a speaker from the UWC ☐

Subject

Name

Organisation

Address

We would like to nominate ..... people to attend the UWC lobby in Glasgow (Give details on a separate sheet) - £10 unemployed £20 employed

I/we would like ..... tickets for the UWC's 'eve of TUC' concert in Glasgow (see editorial for details). Prices £1 unwaged, £4 waged

I would like to join the UWC - £2 unwaged ☐  
- £5 waged ☐

I/We would like to place a bulk order for *Unemployed Organiser* ☐

Name

Name

Address

Mailing Address

Tel: Trade union/organisation

Tel

My organisation would like to affiliate to the UWC ☐  
We enclose £25 (local organisation) ☐  
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